
LIFE STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

HERNANDO CORTES

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LIFE STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

HERNANDO CORTES

LIFE STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Translated from the German by

GEORGE P. UPTON

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CORTES AND MONTEZUMA

LIFE STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

HERNANDO CORTES

*Translated from the German of
Joachim Heinrich Campe*

BY

GEORGE P. UPTON

Translator of "Memories," "Immensee," etc.

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS



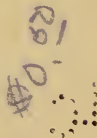
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Translator's Preface

THE story of the career of Hernando Cortes during his conquest of Mexico is a story of extraordinary courage, undaunted resolution, and hideous cruelty. It is a story of the subjection of a "little people," overcome and enslaved by a superior nation, which, in its lust for gold and territorial aggrandizement, left no methods of stratagem, cunning, military science, and barbarous cruelty untried to achieve its purpose. Granted that the early Emperors of Mexico were tyrannical in their treatment of the natives and that their religious rites were accompanied by human sacrifices and cannibalism, Mexican cruelty pales before the horrible scenes enacted by so-called civilized Spain in this dreadful Mexican drama. The three principal figures are Hernando Cortes, Montezuma, and Guatemozin — Cortes, the conqueror; Montezuma, the weak-spirited Emperor, victim of his own people's fury; Guatemozin, the patriot. Cortes was a born adventurer, and in his youth possessed of skill in all military exercises. He was a man of consummate cunning and captivating address, of soaring ambition and marked

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

ability as an administrator and general. Apparently he never knew what it was to fear, and consequently no danger was great enough to appall him. He was so skilled in stratagem that no situation was devious enough to prevent its solution. He had the same greed of gold as all Spaniards of his day had, and no means of obtaining it were considered dishonorable as long as they were successful. But courageous, resolute, and ambitious as Cortes was, he will go down through the ages branded with infamy for his treatment of Montezuma, for the frightful massacres at Cholula and Otumba, for his execution of Guatemozin, last of the Aztec Emperors, for the burning of caciques and chiefs which he ordered, and for the countless atrocities of his men which he permitted. In his old age, like Columbus, he suffered from the neglect of an ungrateful Court, but, while we can sympathize with Columbus in that situation, we can feel no sympathy for Cortes as we recall the black chapters of his career.

G. P. U.

CHICAGO, *July*, 1911.

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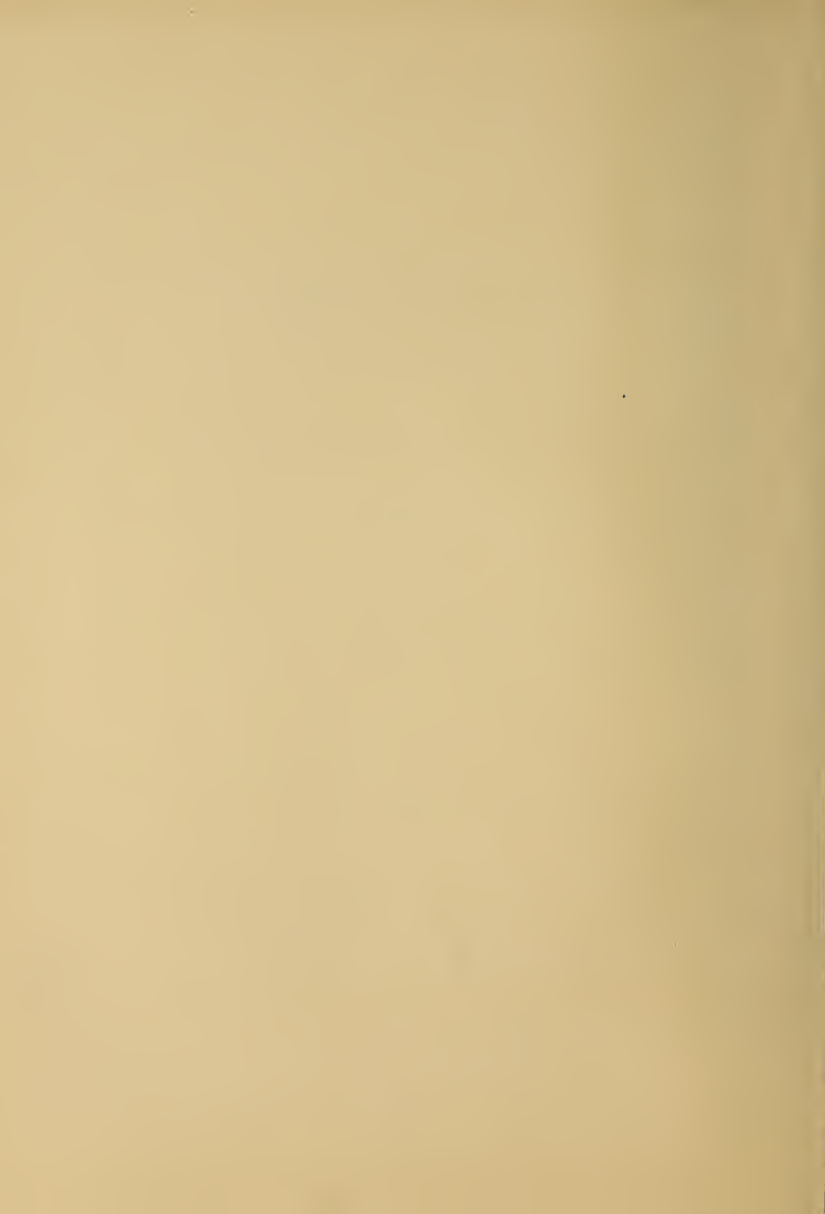
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Hernando Cortes

Chapter I

Velasquez in Cuba — Hernandez de Cordova Discovers Yucatan — The Natives on the Mainland are Hostile — Grijalva Advances from Yucatan Farther Northward — He is the First European to Step upon Mexican Soil

IN the year 1511 Diego, Columbus' son, finding that the gold mines of Hispaniola were nearly exhausted, decided to take possession of the neighboring island of Cuba, or Fernandina, as it was called, in honor of the King of Spain. The force which he sent for the capture of the island was placed under the command of Velasquez,¹ a man described by his contemporaries as possessing extraordinary experience as a soldier, having served seventeen years in European campaigns, also of a renowned family and name, eager for glory and yet ambitious for wealth.

Velasquez speedily subjugated the whole island and at once actively busied himself with the adoption of measures for its welfare. He established

¹ Diego Velasquez was born at Cuéllar, Segovia, in 1465 — some authorities say in 1458 — and died at Havana, Cuba, in 1522 or 1523. He accompanied Columbus to Hispaniola (Haiti) in 1493.

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many settlements, secured farmers by free grants of land and slaves, devoted special attention to the raising of sugar-cane, such a valuable article of commerce in later times, and, above all, to the development of gold mines, which promised better returns than those of Hispaniola. But the subjugation of Cuba was too small a matter to satisfy his ambition, as he would remain subject to the higher authority of Diego Columbus, from which he wished to free himself. The best means for accomplishing this seemed to him the making of important discoveries which would secure him an independent sovereignty. With this end in view, he turned his attention to the westward, in which direction he had every reason to believe he should find a great mainland region which no European had ever reached.

Chance favored his plans. Hernandez de Cordova, a Spaniard,¹ undertook an expedition from Cuba in 1517, with three vessels, to a neighboring island for the capture of slaves. Storms drove him upon the coast. In reply to his question as to the name of the country the natives said, "Teketan," meaning in their language, "I do not understand you." The Spaniards thought this was the name of the place and distorted it into "Yucatan." Thus the peninsula of the mainland, which lies opposite Cuba and divides the Caribbean Sea from

¹ Francisco Hernandez de Cordova was born about 1475 and died at Leon, Nicaragua, in 1526. He was beheaded for attempting to set up an independent government in Honduras.

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the Gulf of Mexico, came by its present name. Cordova first landed at the northeastern end of the peninsula, at Cape Catoche, then sailed along the peninsula, stopping at various places, and at last came to the region of the Campeche of to-day, where the sea forms the Bay of Campeche.

The daring Spaniards had many fierce encounters with the natives, whom they found far more civilized and at the same time more warlike than the other islanders. They were clad in garments of a woven woollen material. Their weapons were wooden swords, tipped with flint, spears, bows, arrows, and shields. Their faces were painted in different colors, and their heads adorned with tufts of feathers. They were the first Americans who constructed dwellings of stone and cement.

In their various encounters with these people the Spaniards sometimes came off losers. In one of them two Indian boys having the Christian names of Julian and Melchior fell into their hands. They proved of great advantage, for they served the Spaniards as interpreters in subsequent communications with the Mexicans. One day, when they had landed to fill their casks with fresh water, fifty Indians approached and inquired if they had come from the place where the sun rises. When the Spaniards answered in the affirmative, they were conducted to a temple, constructed of stone, in which they beheld various ugly images of deities sprinkled with fresh blood. Suddenly two men in

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white mantles, with long, flowing, black hair, stepped forward, holding small earthen braziers, into which they threw a kind of resin. They directed the smoke toward the Spaniards and ordered them upon pain of death to leave the country. Finding it dangerous to remain there, they obeyed and returned to their vessels. At another spot, where they had landed, they were surrounded by so large a multitude of hostile Indians that forty-seven were killed and many wounded in their efforts to get back to their vessels. Among the seventy wounded was Cordova himself. After this disaster they hurried back to Cuba as rapidly as they could, where their leader died after making a report to Velasquez of all that had happened.

Velasquez was delighted at the discoveries made in his name, and decided to continue them. Four vessels were fitted out, and Grijalva,¹ a man of great ability and courage, upon whose uprightness and good judgment Velasquez believed he could depend, was given command of them. He was specially instructed to confine himself to making discoveries without establishing colonies in the new regions. Grijalva left Cuba May 1, 1518, and directed his course toward Yucatan, but the ocean currents drove him southerly, so that he first made land at Cape Catoche. Subsequently he discovered the

¹ Juan de Grijalva was born in Cuéllar in 1489 or 1490 and died in Nicaragua. He was a nephew of Velasquez and the discoverer of Mexico.

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island of Cozumel, off the Yucatan coast. From there he sailed along the coast to Potonchan, where Hernandez had been so foully dealt with. The Spaniards were eager to land and avenge the disaster, and Grijalva consented. The Indians, full of pride and defiance, and delighted with this fresh opportunity, attacked the Spaniards courageously, but they were driven back. Two hundred paid the penalty with their lives for their rashness, and the rest fled panic-stricken all over the country.

Grijalva resumed cruising along the coast. He was astonished everywhere at the sight of villages or towns with houses made of stone and cement, which in passing appeared to the Spaniards finer and better built than they really were. The resemblance between this region and Spain seemed so close to them that they gave it the name of New Spain — a name which it retains to this day. Next they came to the mouth of a river, called by the natives Tabasco, but the Spaniards named it Grijalva, in honor of their leader. The whole region roundabout had such a flourishing appearance and seemed to be populated so densely that Grijalva could not resist the desire to obtain accurate information about it. So he went ashore with his entire armed force. There he encountered a multitude of armed Indians, who with terrible outcries sought to prevent their further advance. But he paid no attention to their menaces, marched up to a bow-shot's distance from them, then halted, drew his

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men up in battle order, and sent the two Americans, Julian and Melchior, who had been taken by Hernandez, to inform them that he had not come there to injure them, but to do them good, and that he was anxious to make a peaceful agreement with them.

The Indians, who had been gazing in astonishment at the closed ranks, the costumes, and weapons of the Europeans, were still more astonished at this declaration. Some of their leaders ventured to advance. Grijalva cordially welcomed them and told them through the interpreters that he and his followers were subjects of a great King who was the absolute ruler of all the countries where the sun rises. This King had sent him to demand their submission to his authority, and he awaited their answer. Thereupon a low murmuring ensued among the Indians, which was stilled by one of their leaders, who replied courageously in the name of his people that it seemed strange to them that the Spaniards should speak of peace and at the same time demand submission. It seemed strange to them also that they should be offered a new ruler without ascertaining whether they were dissatisfied with their present one. As far as the question of war or peace was concerned he was not authorized to give a decisive answer. He must submit that question to his superiors. With these words he retired, leaving the Spaniards not a little astonished at this sensible reply. After a short time he returned and told

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Grijalva that his superiors did not fear war with the Spaniards, if it must be, for they had not forgotten what happened at Potonchan. But they considered peace better than war, and, as a token of this, he had brought many necessities of life for gifts.

Shortly after this, the cacique himself appeared, unarmed and with a small retinue. After friendly greetings on each side he took from a basket golden articles of various kinds set with jewels, and fabrics decorated with beautifully colored feathers, and said to Grijalva that he loved peace and had brought these gifts in confirmation of his words, but, that there might be no opportunity for misunderstanding, he begged him to leave the country as soon as possible. The Spanish leader acknowledged the politeness of the cacique by making gifts in return, and promised to conform to his wishes as soon as he could get under sail.

After cruising some distance along the coast, they reached an island with many stone houses and a temple. In the centre of this temple, which was open on all sides, they saw various hideous idols placed about an altar, elevated a few steps. Near to it were six corpses, which, according to the prevailing horrible custom, seemed to have been offered up as sacrifices on the preceding night. On account of this dreadful spectacle the Spaniards named the place *Isla de los Sacrificios* ("Island of Sacrifice"). Everywhere they found evidences that the inhuman practice of sacrificing men to their deities prevailed

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among these people. Coming to anchor at another island, which was called Kulva by the natives, they saw many more corpses of freshly slaughtered men, which caused even the barbarous Spanish soldiers to shudder at such cruelty. Grijalva gave his surname, Juan, to this island, from which eventually came the name, St. Juan de Ulloa, by which it is now known.

Wherever they went gold was found in abundance. This and the sight of many fruitful spots which they passed aroused a general desire among the men to effect a settlement, but Grijalva persisted in carrying out the orders of Velasquez, and everywhere that he landed, took possession of the country in the name of the King. He continued sailing along the coast until he reached Pánuco. At the mouth of a river there he was so furiously assailed by a swarm of Indians that a dreadful massacre became necessary before they could be driven back. After this, while attempting to sail still farther along the coast, adverse currents forced him to return to Cuba. Upon his arrival he met with bitter reproaches from the unreasonable governor, Velasquez, because he had not availed himself of the excellent opportunity to establish a colony in that rich region, although he had been expressly forbidden to do so when he sailed.

Grijalva had sent back one of his principal officers, Pedro de Alvarado, with a rich collection of jewels, and golden vessels and ornaments, secured from

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the natives by exchanging European knick-knacks for them, and he had told much about the rich country. When Grijalva returned, after an absence of six months, he met with censure because he had carried out the instructions of the governor! The modest, unassuming man bore the undeserved reproaches calmly. To him belongs the honor of being the first European navigator to set foot on Mexican soil and open up intercourse with the Aztecs.

Chapter II

The Youth of Cortes — His Voyage to San Domingo and Settlement there — Cortes under Velasquez in Cuba — He Fits Out a Fleet for the Conquest of Mexico

V ELASQUEZ, an ambitious but at the same time distrustful and fickle man, decided to continue the great discoveries made in his name, and to secure the rich profits which they promised. With this object in view he fitted out a strong fleet with the utmost expedition. The question then arose, Who should take command of it? Not having the courage to participate personally in an undertaking exposed to so many dangers and hardships, he was forced to look for another leader. The choice was a difficult one, for one man seemed to him too cowardly, another too courageous, this one too dull, another too crafty. He was anxious to find a man who would combine with the necessary judgment and courage absolute devotion to him and slavish obedience to his orders, and who would not only accomplish great deeds but at the same time give him all the advantage of them. Fortunately he found such a man, one admirably fitted for such an undertaking, but he did not understand how to make use of him. That man was Cortes.

THE YOUTH OF CORTES

Hernando Cortes, of noble family, was born in 1485 at Medellin, a small town in the Spanish province of Estremadura. From his earliest youth he had unusual courage, unwearied patience in overcoming difficulties, a restless, active spirit, and a burning desire to distinguish himself by great deeds. In his childhood he was weakly. In his fourteenth year he was sent to the University of Salamanca, his father, who built great hopes upon his brilliant talents, having destined him for the law. He chose a calling for him which opened up better prospects for an industrious young man than any other, but the son had no sympathy with his father's purpose. He showed little fondness for books and after his second year of study returned home, to the great disappointment of his parents, and spent his time without following any special avocation. He showed an inclination for a military life, particularly a life full of adventure.

All eyes at that time were directed to the West Indies, and his own eyes were turned to the same region. He decided to enroll himself among those bold spirits who defied all hardships and dangers if only they might enrich their fatherland with new possessions and gain for themselves a glorious name. He was in his twentieth year (1504) when he sailed from Spain and betook himself to San Domingo. On his very first voyage his courage and steadfastness were put to a severe test. He encountered innumerable dangers and trials, but the bold, strong

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youth, whose physical and mental strength had not been weakened by indolence, effeminacy, and shameless debaucheries, laughed at them. To work was a pleasure to him, to hunger and thirst a trifle, to die, if necessary, an indifferent matter.

The vessel which carried Cortes was one of a large number lying at the Canary Islands, taking on stores for their voyages, as was the practice of all vessels at that time when making the passage to the New World. Its commander was a greedy fellow who was anxious to reach the New World market before the rest so as to get a high price for his goods. He sailed away secretly by night, but a furious storm overtook him, dismasted his vessel, and forced him to go back to the Canary Islands. The other captains generously waited for their faithless companion, but he managed to slip away again by night. He lost his course, however, was exposed to hard storms and adverse winds, and his vessel was so violently tossed about that all on board feared for their lives and were not a little enraged at the author of their troubles. The young Cortes, however, was not disturbed by the danger, and contemplated the future joyfully. At last, after long wandering about, the vessel arrived at its destination. A dove which had gone astray lit upon the mast. As it flew off they followed the direction of its flight and reached Hispaniola, where the other vessels had arrived a long time before and the ship-masters had sold their goods.

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Cortes reached San Domingo at a time when Ovando was still governor. His very appearance secured for him a favorable reception. He was prepossessing, pleasing of countenance, and unaffectedly friendly in his contact with every one, but his peculiar qualities of disposition made him still more the favorite. He was open-hearted, indulgent, and magnanimous, but he was also shrewd, far-sighted, and reserved. He spoke maliciously of no one and was good-humored in conversation. He was always ready to confer favors but he could not bear to have them mentioned. These meritorious qualities soon made him a favorite with every one. Immediately upon arrival he went to pay his respects to the governor, but Ovando was absent, attending to affairs in the interior. His secretary, however, received him cordially, and assured him it would not be difficult for him to obtain an abundance of land from Ovando upon which he could settle. Cortes answered: "I have come here to provide myself with gold, not to plough like a field laborer."

Upon his return Ovando induced the young man to give up his ambitious designs, for a short time at least, and convinced him that he would certainly become richer if he settled down as a planter than if he trusted himself to chance. Cortes therefore secured land and an allotment of Indians in the settlement of Azua. The monotony of his life was often relieved by the part he took as an adventurer

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in warlike expeditions, especially in the company of Velasquez, when the latter as Ovando's representative was forced to suppress uprisings of the natives. In this way he became better known to Ovando, who was exceedingly anxious to retain his services. But as his young, courageous spirit was eager for more important undertakings, he applied for and received permission to accompany Velasquez on his expedition to Cuba in 1511. At last he had an opportunity to display his courage and activity. He quickly rose. In a short time the important position of Alcalde of St. Iago was assigned to him. A quarrel with Velasquez soon after occurred, which might easily have been fatal to the incautious Cortes, had not the friendship of the two been so strong. Cortes, who was not a hero of virtue, fell in love with a young lady of high rank, named Catalina Xuarez, and had promised to marry her, but put off the fulfilment of his promise so long that he incurred the angry reproaches of the governor. These reproaches naturally led to a coolness between Cortes and his patron, and Cortes decided that he would lay his grievances before Velasquez' superior in Hispaniola. Other dissatisfied ones joined him and they planned to send a messenger. Cortes was selected, for no other would have ventured to cross secretly in an open boat the distance of eighteen miles to the neighboring island. But the conspiracy was discovered, Cortes was arrested, chained, and placed in close confinement. It is

THE YOUTH OF CORTES

said that Velasquez would have hanged him but for the intercession of friends. Meantime the bold Cortes did not long remain in prison. He shoved back one of the fastenings of his chains, freed his limbs, broke the window, and escaped to a church near by. According to the customs of the time a fugitive could not be seized in a sacred place. Velasquez kept guards upon the lookout, and once, when Cortes incautiously ventured out just a little too far, he was caught, and bound, and conveyed to a vessel which was to sail to Hispaniola the next morning. But fortune favored him. He released himself in the night, jumped from the vessel's side into a boat, thence into the sea, and swam ashore. Exhausted, he sought the same asylum again and declared he would marry Catalina Xuarez, if the governor would pardon him. Velasquez assented, Cortes married Catalina, a reconciliation between himself and Velasquez was effected, and a closer friendship than ever was the result.

When Alvarado returned with glowing accounts of the new discoveries on the mainland, and Grijalva also extolled the great rich western empire, Cortes was the one chosen as the commander of the fleet. The position was accepted by him, and all who were to take part in the expedition were delighted that such an able, courageous, and highly qualified man was to be their leader. Cortes was also delighted at the opportunity of displaying his ability, contributed all that he had in providing an ample

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store of campaign necessities, and aided those of his companions who were too poor to obtain what they needed.

Before the equipment in the harbor of St. Iago was completed Cortes stole away, for he had heard that Velasquez designed to take the supreme command from him, fearing that he might carry off all the glory as well as the profits of the enterprise. His entire force numbered three hundred men, and a hundred more joined him from another part of Cuba, members of distinguished families, eager for the glory and boundless treasures which the expedition promised. ~~The day on which Cortes sailed~~ was the eighteenth of November, 1518. The first destination of the fleet was Trinidad, and the next Havana, where several persons and further stocks of supplies were to be taken aboard.

Velasquez for a long time seemed to be satisfied with the choice of Cortes as leader of the expedition, though many a jealous tale-bearer sought to prejudice him against him. But hardly did he see Cortes sail away before he took a different view of the prospect. He thought to himself, What if he should abuse the authority entrusted to him, refuse to be obedient, and make himself absolute ruler in the country he was to conquer in Velasquez' name? The little clique of Cortes' enemies ever at his side observed what was troubling him and redoubled their efforts to kindle his jealousy into flame, and at last succeeded. A messenger was instantly sent

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to the Alcalde at Trinidad, ordering him to remove Cortes from his position as soon as he arrived there. The Alcalde was prepared to carry out his instructions, but Cortes, who was not conscious of any offence, did not believe that he was bound to resign. He assured the Alcalde that Velasquez' change of mind was due to a misunderstanding and requested him to delay the execution of his instructions until he could send a letter to the governor and receive a reply. The Alcalde, who was not in a position to carry out his instructions by force, gave his consent. Cortes wrote the governor, weighed anchor at once, and sailed for Havana. At the latter place he had to wait some time, partly for his reinforcements and partly to secure one thing or another indispensable to such an important expedition.

At last all was ready. The fleet numbered eleven vessels. The largest, of one hundred tons, not larger than one of our two-masted merchant vessels, was the Admiral's flag-ship. The three next largest were of seventy-eight tons' burthen, and the rest small open barges. Cortes' force had now been increased to six hundred and seventeen, of whom a hundred or so were sailors and artisans, the rest soldiers. Only thirteen of these were armed with muskets and thirty-two with cross-bows. The others carried swords and spears, for the use of fire-arms at that time was very limited. Sixteen horses, ten small cannon or field-pieces, and four falconets or culverins, which are a kind of long, slender can-

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non, no longer in use, constituted the most important part of the outfit. With this comparatively weak equipment, Cortes sailed for an unknown country to make war against the powerful ruler of Mexico, whose prosperous empire, together with the neighboring provinces, was greater than all the countries over which the King of Spain ruled at that time.

In the meantime Velasquez was furious at the news that Cortes, in spite of his prohibition, had sailed away. He charged his representatives whom he had sent to cancel the appointment with treachery. His rage knew no bounds, and he made vigorous preparations to prevent Cortes from escaping a second time from Havana. He sent one of his most trusty subordinates with express instructions to seize Cortes and send him chained and stoutly guarded to St. Iago.

Fortunately Cortes was informed of the danger impending over him in sufficient time to make himself secure. He quickly summoned his force, of whose good-will he was convinced, explained the danger which threatened them, and asked for their opinion. They unanimously declared he should pay no attention to the fickle governor and that he should not surrender his legal rights nor deliver himself into the power of such an unjust and suspicious judge. They implored him, in view of the importance of the expedition, not to give up his leadership, assured him of their perfect confidence

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in him, and expressed themselves ready, in the face of all obstacles and dangers, to follow him even to death. Cortes was easily affected and ready to agree to anything which would aid him in carrying out his purpose. After thanking the soldiers for their consent he at once ordered anchors weighed, and sailed from Havana, February 10, 1519.

Chapter III

Cortes is Regarded as an Enemy by the Natives of Tabasco, and is Forced into a Battle with them — He is Victorious and they Submit

CORTES decided to take the same course which Grijalva had followed before him, and so made the island of Cozumel his next destination. There he had an opportunity to rescue a Spaniard who had been left upon the coast by a shipwreck, and since that time had been a servant among the Indians. This poor fellow, named Aguilar, during the eight years of his abode there, had lost every European vestige and taken on the appearance, color, speech, and habits of the natives so completely that it was difficult to recognize he had ever been a Spaniard. Like the natives, he went naked, the color of his skin was dark brown, and his hair, after the custom of the country, was wound about his head in coils. He carried an oar on his shoulder, a bow in his hand, and a quiver on his back. His entire possessions were contained in a knit bag and consisted of his provisions and an old prayer-book in which he read industriously. He had so far forgotten his mother-tongue that it was difficult to understand him.

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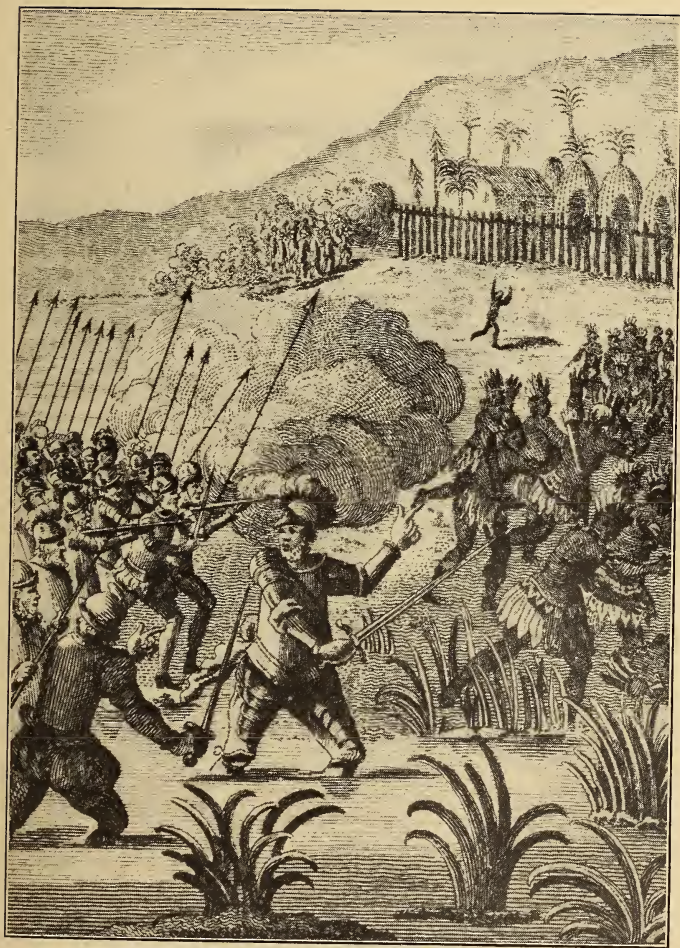
According to his statement he was wrecked in the vicinity with nineteen others. Seven of his comrades were overcome by hunger and exhaustion. The rest fell into the hands of the cacique of that country, a monster who sacrificed five of them to his deities and placed the others in a kind of cage, intending to fatten and then eat them. They had the good fortune, however, to escape. Helpless and despairing, they wandered about the forests, subsisting upon roots and herbs, until at last they met some Indians who took them to a kindly cacique, an enemy of the other. He received them humanely but each day imposed hard tasks upon them. The most of them died in a short time, only two of them, Aguilar and Guerro, surviving. They soon had an opportunity to render the cacique important service in his wars, for which he was very grateful. Guerro married an Indian woman of distinction, was made commander, and gradually became so Americanized that when the Spaniards arrived he did not care to change his conditions. He would not see them, perhaps for shame, for Aguilar said he had pierced his nose and painted various parts of his body as the natives did.

Cortes embraced the poor Aguilar and covered his nakedness with his own cloak. As Aguilar had learned the language of the country during his long stay there, Cortes was rejoiced at his discovery, for he naturally hoped he would be of great service to him in future communications with the Indians.

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From Cozumel he directed his course to Tabasco, and to that part of it where the river Grijalva empties into the sea. He expected to meet a friendly reception, as Grijalva had, but he was disappointed. At sight of his vessels the natives assumed a hostile aspect and seemed determined to prevent him from landing. He sent Aguilar to them to make an agreement, but it was useless. They would not listen to him, and he had to return without accomplishing his object. The event was as unpleasant to Cortes as it was unexpected. He had not planned to begin his conquest in that place. His object was to reach, as soon as possible the region nearest the country of the great Mexican Empire, and begin his operations there. Now he found himself in the unpleasant situation of being forced either to submit to the threats of the natives or to inaugurate hostilities in an outlying province, which, even if they ended successfully, must cost at least time, and lives, of which he had few to spare. If he turned back, the Indians would certainly take it as a mark of cowardice and become more troublesome than ever. After considering this view of the situation, it seemed to him a conclusive reason for attacking them. As the approach of night prevented him from doing so at once, the assault was deferred until the next day, and the intervening night was devoted to the necessary preparations.

At daybreak all were summoned for action. Cortes arranged his fleet in a half circle and in



*THE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE SPANIARDS AND
THE PEOPLE OF TABASCO*



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this order, which was necessary on account of the shores, he began sailing up the stream. But before opening the attack, he sent Aguilar to inform the natives that it rested with them to say whether he should come as an enemy or a friend. Aguilar performed his duty, but instead of listening quietly to him the Indians gave the signal for attack and rowed out in their canoes to meet the fleet. They came together and the Indians began the assault with a dreadful storm of arrows and stones which caused great discomfort to the Spaniards, who were still remaining passive. At this Cortes gave the signal for defence. A single shot from the great cannon was decisive. The Indians, astonished at the unexpected thunder which roared about them, and terrified at the sight of its destructive consequences, jumped from their canoes into the water and endeavored with all their might to escape by swimming. The Spanish vessels drew up to the banks, and Cortes landed with his whole force undisturbed. The battle, however, was far from being ended. The Indians, who had left their canoes, fled into the brush, where a still greater number of their warriors were collected. They rushed forward while Cortes was engaged in placing his men in battle order, and attacked him with arrows, spears, and stones, uttering appalling battle cries. Cortes, however, was not disturbed but continued the arrangement of his ranks until the whole corps was in close battle order. Then they charged

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furiously against the Indians, advanced with wonderful coolness through deep morasses and dense thickets upon the countless swarms of the enemy, and death and terror beat a way for them. The sight of an army with European weapons was as new as it was fearful to the Indians. They could not face it and incontinently took to flight.

The enemy fled to their fortified city of Tabasco. The fortifications consisted only of a row of stakes driven into the ground, after the style of our palisades, and surrounding the city in circular form. Both ends overlapped, and between them a single narrow road led into the city with many windings. Great as the peril seemed to be, Cortes unhesitatingly advanced along this narrow passage, but upon entering the city found the streets blocked up with stakes and the people ready to oppose him. The Indians were forced back again and yet the battle was not ended. They gathered anew in the market place of the city, again offered stubborn resistance, and again were overcome. Thereupon they fled to the woods. Tabasco was captured, and the battle was over. Cortes did not pursue the Indians but took possession of the city for the Spanish crown. He made three incisions with his sword in a large tree and announced that he occupied the city in the name and in favor of the Catholic sovereign, and that he would maintain and defend it with sword and shield against all who should gainsay it. The same declaration was made by his

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soldiers, and the proceedings were written down and formally attested. The plunder taken by the Spaniards did not come up to their expectations, for the Indians carried off the greater part of articles of value, leaving only some provisions which came in good stead for the tired and hungry Spaniards.

At night Cortes quartered his force — in three divisions — in temples at different places and stationed watchmen to guard against a night attack. He made the rounds at different times to see that they were performing their duty. At daybreak he searched the woods near by, but not an Indian was to be seen or heard, which made him a little suspicious. He sent spies to the adjacent region, who brought him the disquieting news that a multitude of Indians, forty thousand at least, were collected, whom they had watched at some distance, while they were getting ready for an attack. Such news as that might well alarm one in Cortes' situation! He was confronted with a force a hundred times as large as his own, compelled to fight for their fatherland, their temples, and their lives. He realized the danger, but, master of himself and his emotions, he maintained as calm and composed a mien as if the report were a mere joke. His example inspired his men with like fearlessness, and they stood ready to follow him wherever he should lead.

Cortes drew up his little army in battle array at the foot of a hill. It protected his men in the rear, and at the same time he could use his cannon in the

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freest and most effective manner. He posted himself with his cavalry in an adjoining thicket, whence at the right time he could charge the enemy unexpectedly. In this order they quietly awaited the onset of the Indians. The ever memorable day upon which the battle was fought was the twenty-fifth of March, 1519, Annunciation Day.

The Indians appeared, most of them armed with bows and arrows. The bowstrings were made of the sinews of some animal or stag's hair, and the arrows were tipped with sharp bones. In addition to these they carried spears which could be thrown from a distance or used as a hand-weapon. One of their most terrible weapons was a great battle sword, made of very hard wood, the edge of which was formed of exceedingly sharp stones, joined together, and which was so heavy that it had to be wielded with both hands, like an axe. Some of them had clubs, others slings with which they could hurl stones of great size with unusual force and accuracy. The leaders alone protected themselves with quilted woollen coverings, and wooden or tortoise shell shields. The rest went naked, but to give them a frightful appearance they painted their faces and bodies in different colors, and to increase their stature they wore headdresses of tall feathers. Their battle music was in keeping with their looks. They used reed pipes and large sea-shells as wind instruments, and drums made of hollowed tree trunks. The art of fighting in close ranks was

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entirely unknown to them. They observed a certain order, however, by dividing the whole force into little squads, each with its own leader. They had this in common with the European plan of battle, that they did not engage all their warriors at the same time in a fight, but kept a part in reserve to come to the help of those in front when it should be necessary. Their opening assault was always made with frightful outcries and with great vigor, but if the enemy withstood the first attack and succeeded in throwing the advance into disorder, a panic would strike them and a general retreat ensue.

Such was the enemy the little army of Spaniards now saw advancing upon them in countless numbers. Silent and solid as a wall they awaited the attack. When they had come within bowshot, the battle opened with terrible yells and a shower of arrows which darkened the air. The Spaniards replied with a cannon and musketry fire, which covered the ground with heaps of the closely crowded enemy. The Indians, however, were undaunted. They filled up the void, threw sand in the air to conceal their losses in a cloud of dust, and after another flight of arrows came to a hand to hand struggle. The Spaniards did their best to overcome superiority of numbers, but the impetuosity and the multitude of the enemy were so great that they could not long withstand them. Their ranks were already broken through in several places, and a general massacre seemed imminent when suddenly

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Cortes appeared with his cavalry and charged into the midst of the enemy. It was a new and dreadful sight to the poor Indians, who had never before beheld horsemen. They thought they were huge monsters, half man and half beast, and were so overcome with fear that their weapons dropped from their hands. The Spaniards improved the opportunity to get into order again, the cannon fire was renewed, and, attacked upon every side, the panic-stricken Indians incontinently fled.

Satisfied with this display of his superior power, Cortes at once ordered that the fugitives should be spared and only a few of them captured in order to make a peaceful arrangement with the whole nation. Eight hundred Indians lay dead upon the field, and only two Spaniards, but seventy of the latter were wounded. All the Indians who were not too severely wounded had fled. The field was made the site of a city, which, in honor of the day and the event, was called Santa Maria de la Vittoria, and afterward became the capital of the country.

On the following day some of the captives were brought before Cortes. Their faces wore an expression of anxiety and fear for they had no doubt that they would be sentenced to death, but how great was their joy and astonishment when he received them with the greatest kindness, and Aguilar, the interpreter, announced their freedom. Their delight was still further enhanced when Cortes displayed his generosity by making them gifts of trifles, which he

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knew would secure their good-will. Overcome with joy, they hastened to tell their people how handsomely they had been treated. The result was that the Spaniards won over all those hearts which had been filled with rage and vengeance. To manifest their confidence and good intentions, various Indians shortly came, bringing all kinds of subsistence for which they were generously recompensed. The cacique himself sent messengers with gifts and begged for peace. It was granted, and when, soon afterward, he came in person, assurances of peace on each side were confirmed by presents. Among other expressions of good-will the cacique brought twenty young women who knew how to bake Indian corn bread, and made a present of them to Cortes. One of them, who had been christened Marina, was the daughter of a cacique and had been kidnapped when a child and sold to the cacique of Tabasco. She was not only unusually beautiful but intelligent, and in a short time learned the Spanish language and was of great service to Cortes afterward in his dealings with the Mexicans.

While the cacique and his leaders were with Cortes they chanced to hear the Spanish horses neigh. Thereupon the terrified Indians anxiously inquired what was the matter with these frightful beings, meaning the horses. They were told that they were angry because the cacique and his people had not been punished more severely for their

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audacity in attacking the Christians. The instant they heard this they hurried off and brought various kinds of game to appease them. They meekly implored forgiveness and promised they would faithfully submit to the Christians in the future.

Their confidence was soon displayed. Spanish knick-knacks were exchanged for the raw products of the country, such as food of all kinds, woollen goods, and golden ornaments. When the natives were asked where the precious metal came from, they pointed westward and replied, "Kulhua," "Mexico." It was at once decided to leave the country and proceed to the land of gold. Before they left, Cortes displayed his solicitude for their conversion. He called their attention to the great doctrines of Christianity, and sought to persuade them to abandon heathenish practices. As the Indians offered but little objection, the conversion ceremony began on Palm Sunday. The whole army, with a priest at its head, moved in solemn procession through the blooming fields, surrounded by thousands of Indians, to the principal temple, in which the image of the heathen divinity had been removed from the altar and displaced by the image of Christ. The priest conducted the mass, the soldiers sang, the natives listened in deep silence and were moved to tears. Their hearts were filled with reverence for the divinity of those beings who seemed to control the thunder and lightning with their hands.

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After the ceremony was concluded the soldiers bade farewell to their Indian friends, and a few hours afterward the little fleet was on its way to the gold coast of Mexico.

Chapter IV

*Cortes Reaches San Juan de Ulloa — His Negotiations for
an Understanding with Montezuma, Emperor of Mexico
— Disquiet in the Army*

CORTES, satisfied with the fortunate outcome of a struggle which might have had most disastrous consequences, and full of hope for similar good fortune in his future undertakings, left Tabasco. A favoring east wind filled the swelling sails, and the course was westward. On this voyage Cortes visited all those places where Grijalva had been before him. At last he reached the island of San Juan de Ulloa, which Grijalva had visited, and came to anchor between the island and mainland. They had not been there long before they saw two large and long canoes approaching them from shore. The Indians in them seemed to be of some importance and were apparently apprehensive of danger, but Cortes received them on board in a friendly manner. They began to speak, and Cortes awaited an explanation of their visit, but they spoke a language which Aguilar, his interpreter, did not understand. They talked in Mexican, but he had learned only Yucatanish — an entirely different tongue.

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In the meantime Cortes to his great delight observed that the slave Marina of Tabasco was conversing with some of the Indians and found that this person, who had been born in a Mexican province and been kidnapped, and taken to Yucatan, could speak the language of both countries with equal facility. Marina spoke with them in her own dialect, communicating what they said to Aguilar in Yucatanish, who in turn spoke to Cortes in Spanish. By this fortunate occurrence Cortes learned that Pilpatoe, the governor of that country, and Teutile, the great Emperor Montezuma's general, had sent these Indians to ascertain his object in coming and to offer him assistance in continuing his journey, should he need it. Their appearance showed them to be a very different people from those wild tribes of the West Indies before encountered. Cortes recognized the difference immediately and replied in a cordial way that he had come with the friendly purpose of bringing tidings to their ruler which would prove of great importance. He dismissed them with gifts and, without waiting for a reply, began sending his people, horses, cannon, and war material to land. The hospitable natives submitted, hastened to lend helping hands to their future oppressors, and set up straw huts for them. Unfortunates! If some friendly spirit could have revealed the future to them and shown them how dearly they would have to pay for this friendly service, how they would have recoiled from

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these wolves in sheep's clothing! How they would have put forth all their strength and joyfully spent the last drop of blood to drive these dangerous strangers from their shores!

On the following day Pilpatoe and Teutile appeared in person with a numerous retinue of armed Mexicans. Their appearance was imposing as befitted the majesty of their great sovereign. Cortes also displayed as much pomp as his circumstances permitted, to impress them with his own importance and that of the sovereign he represented. He ordered his troops to march at his side with military precision and in respectful silence, and received the Mexican officers with a display of dignity which deeply impressed them. Upon being asked who had commissioned him, he haughtily replied with intentional brevity that he came in the name of Charles of Austria, the great and powerful monarch of the East, who had entrusted him with a message to the Emperor Montezuma that could only be delivered in person. He desired therefore that he should be conducted to him.

Ferdinand, the Catholic, who ruled over Spain in the time of Columbus, had no sons, but left a daughter, named Joanna, who married Philip, an Austrian prince. A son was born to them, named Charles, and it is he who is mentioned above. When Ferdinand died, Charles, whose father was no longer living, became heir to his crown. He was also sovereign of the Netherlands, which had come into his

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possession a year previously. Later he was chosen German Emperor and thus became one of the most powerful monarchs in Europe. As four princes by the name of Charles had occupied the throne before him, he was designated Charles the Fifth.

The Mexicans were much embarrassed by the resolute declaration of Cortes. They knew that his determination to have a personal interview with their Emperor would be extremely disagreeable to the latter. Montezuma had been greatly disturbed at the first appearance of Europeans on the Mexican coast. There was an old saying in his country that a mighty people dwelt toward the east, who sooner or later would attack and overthrow the Mexican Empire. How this saying originated it is not easy to say, but it is certain that the superstitious Mexicans, and Montezuma himself, were terrified by the old prophecy as soon as the Europeans appeared. This was also the reason why Montezuma's ambassadors were so disturbed when Cortes demanded the interview. Meanwhile, before making a reply to his demand, they sought to win his favor with gifts, among them ten bales of fine woollens, exquisite feather cloaks, whose beautiful and delicate colors rivalled the finest paintings, and a willow basket filled with gold ornaments. Cortes expressed his gratitude for the gifts, which emboldened them to tell him such an interview would be impossible. To their intense astonishment Cortes, with a sinister and angry expression of face, interrupted them

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by declaring that he could not return to the great monarch, whose representative he was, without carrying out his object. That was more than they had expected and all they could do was to request Cortes to have patience until they could acquaint Montezuma with his purpose and receive his reply. Cortes assented to this and sent gifts to the Emperor. These consisted of a richly carved and colored arm-chair, a head covering having a gold medallion with the image of St. George and the dragon on it, a quantity of necklaces and bracelets and ornaments of cut glass, which, in that country where they had no glass, was regarded by the Mexicans as a precious stone.

Upon this occasion also several painters attached to the Mexican retinue made drawings upon white cotton of the most remarkable European objects they observed. Learning that these drawings were to be sent to the Emperor, Cortes decided to offer the artists still more interesting subjects that would be likely to make a deep impression upon Montezuma. He drew up his entire force in battle array and displayed before the astonished Mexicans a realistic picture of a battle conducted in the European manner. The spectators were so overcome with astonishment and awe that some of them fled, others in a dazed condition threw themselves upon the earth, while the rest fancied that what they saw and heard was a game for their diversion. The artists now had an opportunity to use their pencils in

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depicting the fearful and destructive effect of European warfare. They worked with trembling hands, and when their pictures were finished, they were sent with the other gifts by swift runners to the Emperor. In that country they had swift runners on all the principal roads leading from the most distant provinces to the capital, ready at any moment to convey intelligence of all that was transpiring at any place.

In a few days the Emperor's reply was received. As was expected, the interview was declined, but to mitigate the disagreeableness of the refusal, Montezuma accompanied it with gifts which were truly regal. Pilpatoe and Teutile had the unpleasant duty of presenting both. They wisely produced the gifts first, to prepare Cortes, if possible, for a favorable reception of the reply.

The gifts were brought in by a hundred Indians and spread out on mats at Cortes' feet. The Spaniards greedily gazed at these proofs of the richness of the empire. There were samples of cotton which resembled silk in its gloss and fineness, pictures of animals, trees, and other natural products skilfully wrought out in vari-colored feathers, and gorgeous necklaces, bracelets, rings, and other ornaments of gold. But as the sun eclipses all the other luminaries in the heavens, so were these objects eclipsed by two large circular disks, one of which was of solid gold, the other, of silver. The one represented the sun, the other the moon. As if for the

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purpose of still further exciting the cupidity of the Spaniards, several caskets filled with precious stones, pearls, and grains of gold from the streams and mines were presented.

Cortes accepted these splendid gifts with expressions of the utmost respect for the giver, and thereupon the ambassadors proceeded to the disagreeable part of their commission. They declared on behalf of their sovereign that he could not permit foreign soldiers to approach the capital or remain longer within the limits of the Mexican Empire. They were requested to retire immediately. Fair and reasonable as the request was, Cortes assumed the mien of one who had been insulted, and asserted even more haughtily than before that he utterly refused to accept the reply, for his own honor and that of his sovereign would be offended should he return without having had the interview. The eyes of the Mexicans, who were accustomed to abject submission to their ruler, were fixed in astonishment upon a man who dared to resist anything which their absolute lord had ordered. Such audacity was so terrible to them that it was some time before they could recover from the shock. At last they regained composure and begged of this bold European a second delay in order to report his unexpected persistency at the capital. Cortes again consented, but upon the condition that he should not have to wait too long for a reply. Firm and decided as he appeared to be in these negotiations,

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he was not altogether sure that he was on secure ground. Everything convinced him that he had to deal with a powerful and well managed government. It seemed the most hazardous thing in the world to oppose such a power with a handful of Spanish adventurers.

Nevertheless he held to the bold purpose of venturing the undertaking, cost what it might. Two motives actuated him. Religious zeal was the first. He was convinced he would be doing Heaven a great service if he could convert these heathen to Christianity. The second was based on his own doubtful circumstances, for, after what had occurred between himself and Velasquez, the governor, upon leaving Cuba, he could not hope to escape unpunished when he returned. As his life was in danger in any event, he might better risk it in the accomplishment of an unheard of adventure than expose himself to the danger of losing it at the hands of the hangman upon his return. Unfortunately there were several in his army who were growing very anxious, and these were men who were more closely attached to Velasquez than to him. They had used their utmost efforts to disaffect the others and to excite a general uprising so as to force their leader to return to Cuba. But the prospect of securing vast and exhaustless treasures was so strong that nothing else could make a deep impression upon them. Besides, they believed there was good reason now to expect a favorable answer from Mexico.

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The reply came at last, but it was not what they had anticipated. Far from being alarmed by the stubbornness of the Spanish general, Montezuma had come to the manly conclusion to abide by his decision that the Europeans must retire. Teutile brought the disagreeable message, as well as more handsome gifts. Cortes thought best this time to assume a less insolent attitude and mildly replied that the Christians esteemed it their duty to instruct their ignorant neighbors in the doctrines of that religion which pointed all men to the only road to happiness! It was for this reason his greater monarch had sent him to show Montezuma and his subjects the error of their ways, which they could no longer look upon without pity. Therefore he could not leave without insisting that this interview should take place. Teutile had hardly the patience to wait for the close of Cortes' statement. He rose from his seat angrily at last and indignantly declared that as the Emperor's gracious offers were of no avail, the instructions of his master would be carried out in a more forcible manner. With these words he hastily rushed out, followed by his entire retinue and all the Mexicans who were in the vicinity. In a short time the whole region was abandoned by the natives.

This was more than Cortes had expected. He was surprised and his danger now was greatly increased. With great anxiety he contemplated the results which must follow from this occurrence.

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The most direful evil threatening them was the utter lack of subsistence, which the hospitable natives had so generously furnished them hitherto. The discontented ones in the army renewed their efforts to force Cortes to return to Cuba. They ventured now openly to inveigh against him, to accuse him of foolhardiness, and to urge their comrades not to suffer him to lead them farther in the way to destruction. Cortes, who was as courageous as he was far-sighted, with the aid of his confidants secretly investigated the sentiments of his army, and when he was informed that the insurgents were not making any deep impression, he summoned the foremost of the instigators, among whom a certain Ordaz was conspicuous, met them in a friendly manner, and inquired the meaning of their conduct. They did not conceal their purpose, but urged even vehemently that they should embark and sail back to Cuba.

Cortes quietly listened to them. Then he replied that so far as he was concerned, in view of the danger to which they were exposed, he did not see how, as their leader, he could oppose their wishes. Therefore he would give his consent. He thereupon caused it to be proclaimed through the camp that all must be ready to embark for the return voyage to Cuba. He clearly foresaw what an uproar this would cause and his anticipations were promptly realized. The Spaniards, who, since their landing, had dreamed of nothing but exhaustless treasures, stood as if thunder-

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struck when they learned that they had based their assurance upon such slender hopes, and that, without having earned the slightest reward for their previous hardships, they were to return home poorer than when they started away. These reflections were intolerable, and an angry murmur of discontent at the fickleness of their leader spread through the camp.

Cortes was rejoiced at this, for he clearly saw it would aid him in his plans. He contrived with the aid of his confidants to increase the indignation of the soldiers still more. They complained all the more loudly that absolute cowardice was keeping them from the road to glory and wealth. The result was increased excitement and a general demand that their leader should appear before them. That was just what Cortes desired. He came at once with a look of extreme surprise on his face. They unanimously accused him of lack of courage in doubting the successful outcome of an undertaking for the spread of the true religion and for the great glory and advantage of the fatherland. They declared furthermore that for their part they were firmly determined to pursue the glorious course upon which they had entered, and to choose another leader if he faint-heartedly deserted them. Their defiant words were music to his ears, and it was some time before he recovered from his surprise. At last he began to express his astonishment at what he had heard. He assured them that he had never

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dreamed of giving up hopes which were as great as they were well founded. But, as it had been stated to him that his entire army had become discouraged and wished to go back, he had unwillingly decided to comply with its wishes. At this point his excited soldiers with united voices declared he had been deceived. A few cowards had charged the whole army with cowardice. They were ready to risk their blood and life to carry out his great purpose. He might lead them where he pleased. They were ready to follow him even to the death.

All was as Cortes wished. With an expression of joy and satisfaction he extolled the glorious steadfastness of his soldiers and promised to carry out the desires which they had so unanimously expressed. He would therefore, he added, end his stay in the region where they were and march into the heart of the country with the larger part of the army. A universal and enthusiastic cheer greeted his decision. Now came the last act of the comedy. He was and still remained their leader, but his entire authority depended solely upon their good-will. The absolute authority of the soldiers that had made him their commander, under changed circumstances could take the command away from him. He sought to remove this possibility in the following crafty way. He named a court of justice for the new colony whose membership he knew was favorable to him. Hardly was this done, and hardly had the magistrates assembled, before Cortes appeared

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in their midst, his staff of commander in hand. After permission had been granted he thus addressed them:

"I regard you, gentlemen, from this time forward as the representatives of our great sovereign. Your decisions will always have the sanctity of law. You unquestionably recognize the necessity that our army must have a leader whose authority does not depend upon the caprice of the soldiers. Now I find myself in this position. Since the governor has revoked my appointment, both my authority and my position, indeed, are doubtful. I consider myself bound, therefore, to resign my command, which rests upon such a doubtful basis, into your hands and to request you, after due consideration, to designate some one in the name of the King who seems to you most worthy of being the commander. For my part, I am ready as a common soldier, pike in hand, to furnish an example to my comrades of obedience to the one selected as leader."

With these words he kissed his staff of command, handed it reverently to the Chief Justice, placed his letter of resignation on the table, and left. The judges thereupon played out the farce. For appearances' sake they accepted the resignation, pretended the proper consideration, at last made a new choice, and Cortes was unanimously elected commander. Thereupon the army was summoned, and the choice was announced and enthusiastically welcomed.

Chapter V

Founding of the City of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz — Disaffected Caciques Join Cortes — Destruction of a Heathen Temple because of Human Sacrifices — Introduction of Christianity — Cortes Sinks his Fleet after Sending a Vessel to Spain

CORTES was now the authorized commander at the head of six hundred greedy wolves, before whom the countless hordes of naked Mexicans were as so many defenceless sheep. The High Court appointed by Cortes gave to the settlement, which was established before his departure, the name of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz, "the rich city of the true Cross."¹ The budding settlement was called "rich" because it was there they had a chance to judge of the wealth of the Mexican Empire by the gifts which had been sent, and because they expected that the treasures of that rich people, unfortunately for them, would soon be flowing in there. The addition, "true Cross," was made because they

¹ Villa Rica has been a movable municipality. It was nominally founded on the present site of Vera Cruz and known as Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz. This was in 1519. Later, actual settlement was made farther north. In 1525 the site was changed to a place on the Rio de la Antigua. The final removal to the present site was made in 1599, the city being known by its present name, Vera Cruz.

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landed there on the anniversary of the Crucifixion. This remarkable appellation of the first European colony in Mexico indicates the two leading passions which animated the Spanish adventurers, namely, avarice and religious enthusiasm. They were animated alike by the longings to fill their purses with gold and Heaven with souls. It was a mixture of the earthly and heavenly, cruelty and apparent humanity, shameless cupidity and pretended piety.

The discontented Velasquez faction in Cortes' camp soon discovered that they had been deceived and began to murmur afresh. Cortes at once seized those who were the most intemperate in speech and placed them on board the vessels in chains. Those who had been misled into sympathy with the mutineers were sent, under a reliable leader and in the company of several of the loyal ones, into the neighboring region to procure subsistence. After they had returned with abundant supplies, and hunger was appeased, a reconciliation was soon effected. Every one of them acknowledged his authority, and they soon became his most trusty and devoted followers. Their destiny and his were now joined, for they had mutually taken the decisive step and must follow him wherever he led. When peace was fully restored, the Spaniards made all their preparations for departure, and a fortunate event cleared the way of all obstacles. They encountered five Indians, messengers from a cacique, whose possessions were not far distant, who asked to be conducted to the

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Spanish commander. Their request was granted, and Cortes, with the aid of his interpreter, learned the agreeable news that the cacique of Zempoala had heard of the great deeds accomplished by the Spaniards at Tabasco and was anxious to make a friendly treaty with them. After much questioning Cortes discovered that Montezuma, of whom the cacique of Zempoala was a vassal, was a proud, overbearing, and cruel master, both hated and feared by all his subjects, who were only waiting for an opportunity to free themselves from his yoke.

Cortes was careful to conceal his satisfaction over this intelligence. He knew how easy it is to overthrow the mightiest empire as soon as dissatisfaction and misunderstandings arise between the ruler and his people, and he now had not the slightest doubt of the success of his undertaking, which but for this fortunate event might have proved foolhardy in the extreme. The Indians were dismissed with friendly assurances for themselves and their master, and with the promise that Cortes would shortly pay them a visit. To fulfil his promise and at the same time to investigate a spot which they recommended as a convenient place for a colony, he departed with his whole army after giving orders to his fleet to coast along in that vicinity. At the close of the first day's march they reached an Indian village which was completely deserted. They found empty houses and temples with images of deities, remnants of human beings who had been

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sacrificed, and some books, the first which had been discovered in America. They were made of parchment or hide which was smeared over with gum and arranged in leaves. In place of letters they contained pictures of all kinds and symbols connected with the abhorrent Mexican religion.¹ On the following day Cortes continued his march. They came to broad luxurious plains and wooded regions rich with the vegetation of the tropics. The branches of the stately trees were hung with dark red, gracefully curving vines and other parasitic plants of brilliant color. The undergrowth of prickly aloes, interlaced with wild roses and honeysuckles, in several places made almost impenetrable thickets. In the midst of this profusion of fragrant blossoms, countless birds and swarms of butterflies fluttered about, while exquisite singing birds filled the air with their melody. Although the invaders were not very susceptible to the beauties of nature, they could not help expressions of delight, and, as they traversed this earthly paradise, it reminded them of the beautiful regions in their own fatherland.

Cortes was greatly surprised to find the whole country deserted, although it was the territory of the cacique of Zempoala. It looked suspicious to him. But toward evening twelve Indians,

¹ Picture-writing at this time was the means employed by the Mexican priesthood for recording religious festivals and legends, for keeping calendars of years, and for recording historical events, much after the manner of the Egyptian hieroglyphs.

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carrying provisions, who had been sent by the cacique, met them. They besought the Spanish leader in the name of their master to go to his residence, which was only a sun's (one day) distance from there. He would find everything there that he and his men needed. Upon being asked why the cacique himself had not come to meet him in person, they replied that he was prevented by physical infirmity. Cortes sent six of the Indians back with thanks, retaining the rest to act as guides. On the following day the cacique's city came in sight, lying in a fruitful, smiling region, and very handsome in appearance. Some of the soldiers in the advance rushed back, excitedly shouting that the walls of the city were made of solid silver. To their great regret they found they were mistaken, for the walls were only covered with a cement so white and glistening in the sunshine that it easily deceived those who dreamed day and night of nothing but gold and silver. Upon entering the city they found all the streets and public squares filled with curious natives who were unarmed and conducted themselves more quietly than might have been expected of such a multitude of uncivilized beings.

As they approached the house of the cacique, his Indian highness himself appeared. His figure revealed the nature of the infirmity which had prevented him from going out to meet his guests. He was so monstrously fat that he could scarcely walk, his servants having to support and move

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him along. His shapeless bulk and clumsy manner were so ludicrous that Cortes had some difficulty in restraining his men from loud laughter and in preserving his own seriousness. The attire of the cacique was gorgeous. He was dressed in a cloak profusely set with precious stones, and his ears and lips were perforated and richly adorned. His address of welcome did not in the least correspond with his laughable appearance. It was very clever, and well put together, and closed with the request that Cortes would condescend to be his guest and abide with him, so that they might have an opportunity to talk together at leisure. The rest of the day was spent in partaking of refreshment and enjoying the fruits which grew there in great profusion.

In his interview with the cacique Cortes designedly impressed him with the idea that he had been sent there by the great eastern monarch for the purpose of putting an end to tyranny in that part of the world. This encouraged the cacique to make bitter complaint of the haughtiness and injustice of Montezuma, whom he did not hesitate to characterize as a cruel tyrant, whose yoke was intolerable not only to himself but to others of his vassals. His indignation was so great, as he spoke of it, that tears sprang from his eyes. Cortes endeavored to quiet him and assured him of his protection. He also informed him that the power of the tyrant did not disturb him in the least, for



*M*EXICAN CACIQUES BEFORE CORTES

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he knew that his own power, which was supported by Heaven, was irresistible. After taking a cordial leave of the hospitable Indian, Cortes set out upon his march to Chiahuitzlan, the place selected for a settlement. Their way led over fruitful plains and through pleasant woodlands, and after a moderate day's journey they saw the city upon a rocky eminence. The people had fled. As they reached the market-place fifteen Indians emerged from a temple, greeted the strangers, and assured them that their governor and all his people would come back without delay if their safety were guaranteed. Cortes solemnly assured them no one should be hurt and in a short time the cacique and his people overcame their fears and returned. Cortes was pleased to discover that the cacique of Zempoala was there also. Scarcely had the interview begun when bitter complaints were made of Montezuma's persecutions. Cortes, who heard these complaints now for the second time, consoled them and renewed his promises of protection.

In the meantime some of the Indians approached the two caciques and whispered something in their ears which greatly astonished them. They sprang up affrighted, and left the spot trembling. Uncertain what might be the cause of their fear, they were followed, and the reason was soon discovered. Six splendidly clad representatives of Montezuma accompanied by a considerable number of slaves, holding feather umbrellas over their heads, passed

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the Spanish quarters with glances of contempt at Cortes and his officers. Their haughtiness so enraged the soldiers that they were restrained with difficulty from violently assaulting the Mexicans. Marina, who had been sent to gather information, returned with the news that they had bitterly reproached the two caciques for their treachery in receiving strangers, who were the declared enemies of their sovereign. As a penalty for their disloyalty, besides the customary tribute, twenty Indians should be delivered over to them as a sacrifice to the offended deities. Cortes was enraged but wisely refrained from giving expression to his wrath. He assured the caciques they need have no fear of harm and instructed them to bring Montezuma's messengers before him in chains to give an account of themselves. The caciques, who had been used to absolute obedience to their master, hesitated, but Cortes, leaving them no time for reflection, repeated his orders so emphatically that they dared not offer objection. The messengers were arrested, the Spaniards, for appearances' sake, taking no part in it. Having gone thus far, the caciques would have gone still further and done to the fettered messengers what Montezuma proposed to do to the Indians, but Cortes objected to such inhumanity and ordered that the prisoners should be guarded by his own men.

Cortes desired, if possible, to conceal the appearance of open hostility to the powerful Montezuma. He cunningly planned to put him under obliga-

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tions to himself by making him believe he had not the least connection with what had occurred. With this purpose in view he summoned two of the prisoners at night, announced to them that they were free, and instructed them to inform their master that he would strive to secure the liberty of the others, and with this dismissed them. The Indians were told the next day that the prisoners had escaped. Shortly after this, the other prisoners were permitted to join their companions. This tricky dealing had the effect which Cortes expected. In the meantime other caciques were found in the neighboring mountainous region who shared the same hatred toward their Emperor and were equally desirous of escaping his tyrannical rule. All these heads of Indian tribes, bearing the general name of Totonacs, entered into agreements with Cortes, disavowed the authority of Montezuma, and declared themselves vassals of the King of Spain.

Steps were now taken for the founding of a city at the new settlement. The name of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz was retained for the city, but the name to-day has been abbreviated to Vera Cruz. Every one in the Spanish army assisted in laying the walls and constructing the buildings of the new city. No one refused, and Cortes set an example for all by assisting personally. The work went on with incredible swiftness and in a short time the enclosed place was sufficiently secure against Indian assaults. Meanwhile Montezuma's messengers had returned

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and performed the favorable offices expected by Cortes. Their report considerably mitigated the anger of the monarch, who in his first heat of passion had ordered the mustering of a mighty army to extirpate these strangers and their Indian auxiliaries by fire and sword. Now, however, he was greatly concerned and decided to employ kind measures to induce these dreaded strangers, if possible, to go away peacefully. To this end he sent messengers with gifts of great value, two young princes, relatives of the Emperor, being the bearers. They reached the Spanish camp just at the time of the completion of the fortifications. They discharged their duty, presented the costly gifts, thanked Cortes for the assistance he had rendered in releasing the prisoners, and concluded with the request that he would be pleased to leave the territory of their sovereign.

Cortes showed them the greatest honor and made the following reply: He was sorry that the Emperor had been caused trouble by the imprisonment of his messengers, and yet it must be acknowledged that they had brought it upon themselves by an inhuman demand, which he hoped had been made without the Emperor's knowledge. In any event he must declare that the Christian religion did not recognize the cruel practice of human sacrifice and that he felt himself bound to prevent it wherever and however he could. As for the wrong which had been done the Emperor, that had been compensated for by the release of the prisoners, and, as he

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was under obligations to the allies he had accepted, he flattered himself that the Emperor would overlook the hasty act of the caciques of Zempoala and Chiahuitzlan, and pardon them. He was obliged to take these vassals of the Emperor under his protection for they had striven to make amends for Teutile's incivility by giving him a hospitable reception. As to his departure from the country, he had already had the honor to assure their master that a mission of the utmost consequence bound him not to return to his fatherland until he had had a personal interview. A European soldier never feared to perform any duty imposed upon him by his superiors. The messengers, amazed at the cool and stately manner in which Cortes delivered his reply, returned, filled with admiration at his courageous firmness and with secret contempt for their own sovereign, to whom they reported all they had seen and heard.

The new Spanish city was now in a satisfactory state of defence, and Cortes devoted himself in earnest to the completion of other necessary affairs. Fortune seemed decidedly in his favor, but his excessive religious zeal came near ruining everything. Word was brought to him that human sacrifices were to take place in one of the temples of his allies. Enraged at their cruel superstition and that such an enormity should be attempted under his very eyes, he rushed to the temple with some of his soldiers and threatened destruction by

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fire and sword if they did not instantly release the intended victims. His zeal did not stop with this. He demanded that the priests should pull down their idols, and renounce their false religion forever, although they did not yet know of a better one. The priests prostrated themselves at his feet, moaning and lamenting, and the caciques present trembled. As they refused to pull down their idols, he ordered his soldiers to do it by force. The priests rushed to arms and in a few moments Cortes and his little band were surrounded by a crowd big enough to appall the heart of the stoutest. But Cortes remained unmoved and announced to the assembled multitude that the first arrow fired by them would cost them the lives of their caciques and the destruction of them all. The soldiers advanced to carry out his orders. In an instant the idols were hurled down; the sacred vessels and the altar followed them. They were all destroyed, and the temple was cleaned. The human blood which adhered to the walls was washed off, and the image of the Virgin was set in the place of the idols. The astonished Indians expected that fire would descend from heaven any instant and revenge this indignity to their divinities. But not a spark was seen, and the temple-stormers continued their work audaciously and triumphantly before their very eyes. This weakened their faith and caused them to reflect, with the result that they gradually came to believe that the Spaniards were divinities themselves and

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mightier than their own gods. They did not long stop to consider, but, gathering up the remnants of their idols, contemptuously threw them into the fire. The temple was consecrated as a Christian church and upon the same day was dedicated with Roman Catholic ceremonies, which the Indians greatly wondered at though they did not understand them.

Cortes had hardly escaped the danger to which his religious ardor exposed him before another and no less threatening one confronted him. Some of the soldiers and sailors, tired of wandering about and alarmed at the prospect of fresh dangers on the march to the capital, had entered into a plot against the commander and decided to seize a vessel, make their escape to Cuba, and notify the governor of what Cortes had been doing. Fortunately the plot was discovered before it was too late. Cortes arrested the leaders and imposed a fitting penalty for the offence. As he was convinced that the source of disaffection had not entirely disappeared in his little army, he gave the matter serious consideration and at last hit upon a definite but dangerous plan of intimidating their small souls and causing them to recoil with terror from any thought of mutiny. He determined to remove the last hope of return and to leave them the alternative of an advance upon the Mexican capital or death, by destroying his fleet, thus convincing the faint-hearted ones in his army that there was no middle course and that they must either conquer or die.

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Great as was the courage necessary to accomplish this, still greater was the task of making it acceptable to his army. Fortunately Cortes was as tactful as he was brave. He began by dismantling his vessels. He had the rigging removed and all the material on board as well as the cannon brought ashore. The ships' carpenters then examined the hulls of the vessels and reported that they were in such a wretched condition it would be impossible to repair them. Cortes now inspired his soldiers with such courage and zeal that they hastened of their own accord to destroy them — their last refuge should the expedition prove a failure — and to bring the boards and planks on shore. Only one of them was spared to carry out Cortes' purpose. He had been appointed leader by the tribunal which he himself had chosen, but in reality this was not any more authoritative than if he had appointed himself. He was anxious to place his rights upon a secure footing, and, with this end in view, he decided to send a vessel to Spain to obtain the sanction of the Court for all his movements thus far, as well as relief from any further responsibility to Velasquez and his appointment as absolute governor of the empire to be conquered by him.

He knew of but one sure way to accomplish his purpose, and that was to send the government actual proofs of the treasure he would secure for it. To make these convincing he determined to send all the gifts which had been received from Montezuma,

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and that all concerned, officers, soldiers, and sailors, should contribute their share. It was a hard demand, but Cortes ventured it and carried his point. With these gifts Cortes sent a letter to the Emperor in which he gave a detailed account of all that had occurred — his various discoveries, his battles and dealings with the natives, their conversion to Christianity, his own dangers and hardships, and much information about the countries he had visited. He described his difficulties with the governor of Cuba, what had been done with regard to settlements, and besought the Emperor to confirm all that had been accomplished as well as his own authority. In the meantime he was thoroughly certain that with the help of his brave companions he could place the great Indian Empire in possession of the Castilian crown.

The officials of Villa Rica also wrote a letter similar to that of Cortes, and closed it with an emphatic statement of the maladministration of Velasquez, his venality, extortions, schemings for his own profit, and disregard for the advantage of his sovereign. With these two letters a third was sent in the name of the citizen soldiery of Villa Rica, expressing their loyalty to their sovereign and praying him to confirm the appointment of Cortes as their leader. The richly laden vessel, in charge of noblemen upon whom Cortes could depend, left Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz July 26, 1519, and, in pursuance of exact orders, anchored for a

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short time on the north coast of Cuba, but fortunately escaped the pursuers sent out by Velasquez.

Cortez now prepared to march. His army consisted of five hundred infantry, fifteen cavalymen, and six field-pieces. The others, about fifty men, mostly invalids, besides two horses, remained as part of the garrison at Vera Cruz. Including his auxiliaries, Cortes had only thirteen hundred men and one thousand so-called *tamanes*, that is, porters, who had to carry the necessary baggage and subsistence. In that country, where there were no horses or pack animals of any kind, a class of men, named as above, carried things from one place to another. For the security of those he left behind Cortes took fifty of the leading Indians of the country with him, whom he kept as hostages, though they were not aware of it.

Chapter VI

Cortes' March to Tlaxcala—Battle and Defeat of the Tlaxcalans — Montezuma's Messengers

THE little army set out from Zempoala August 16, 1519. Nothing of consequence marked the first day's march. Their way led through the territory of their ally, the cacique. They met with a friendly reception and hospitable treatment. At last they came to the borders of the mountainous country of Tlaxcala.¹ The natives of this region surpassed all the other Americans in extraordinary courage and especially in their love of freedom. They had bravely thrown off the Mexican yoke and for a long time maintained a republic. The country sent its representatives to Tlaxcala, the capital, and these representatives, or chiefs, in assembly, constituted the tribal council and law-making power of the whole nation. Their form of government was also an aristocratic one. Pride and love of liberty, courage and a warlike disposition were the chief characteristics of this

¹The Tlaxcalan Indians were less advanced in the arts than the Aztecs, but were very warlike and liberty-loving. Their principal pueblo was on the spot now occupied by the city of Tlaxcala. Some of their descendants still occupy that region.

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small but formidable people. Montezuma had vainly tried to subdue them and to induce bold and imperious spirits among them to usurp authority. They stoutly maintained liberty, that noblest blessing of humanity, against every assault, and remained invincible. Cortes would have rejoiced to secure such a people for his allies and decided therefore, as soon as he reached their borders, to send a friendly embassy, after the Indian manner, accompanied with all the customary ceremony.

Four of the leading Zempoalans were selected for this duty, and Marina undertook to deliver a stately address to the Tlaxcalans, which she had to learn by heart. They were arrayed in the following manner: They put on long cloaks of a woollen material. Upon the left arm they carried a great shell in place of a shield, and in the right hand an arrow with white feathers, the tip of which was bent downward. This was a symbol of friendliness. An arrow with red feathers would have meant war. Thus equipped, they set out without fear, confident no harm would come to them, but at the same time taking the precaution not to leave the highroad, because there alone would their dress protect them.

As soon as the four messengers reached Tlaxcala they were conducted to a building specially fitted up with everything necessary for an audience. On the following day they were requested by the Council, which was in session, to deliver their message. The

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assembled members, on account of their age, sat upon low seats, made of some rare wood. With the utmost reverence, manifested by covering their heads with their cloaks, the messengers advanced, holding their arrows aloft, and the councillors rose slightly from their seats. They then bowed in their peculiar manner and with measured steps advanced to the centre of the apartment and sank upon their knees, and with downcast eyes awaited permission to speak. When this had been granted, they sat cross-legged and Marina began her address:

“Noble republic! Brave and mighty people! Your friends and allies, the caciques of Zempoala and the mountains, send you greeting and wish for you rich harvests and the downfall of your enemies. Next they send you word that an extraordinary people have come to our country from the sunrise land. They seem more like gods than men. They have come across the sea in great palaces and carry in their hands for weapons the thunder and lightning of heaven. According to their statements they are servants of a higher God than ours, who cannot endure tyranny or human sacrifice. Their leader is the messenger of a very mighty monarch, who is bound by the dictates of his religion to redress the grievances and persecutions we have suffered from Montezuma. This leader has freed us already. It is now necessary that he should make his way through your country to Mexico, and he wishes to know in what manner this tyrant has persecuted

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you so that he may defend your rights, as well as his own, and settle other matters connected with his journey. He comes also with friendly intentions and desires nothing more from you than a free passage through your country. You may be sure he seeks only your own advantage, that his weapons are the instruments of justice, and that those who bear them are by nature peace-loving and will never use their strength except against those who first offend or attack them."

At the conclusion of the address the messengers rose to their knees, made a low bow in that posture, reseated themselves cross-legged, and awaited an answer. The councillors replied at first in an informal way that they were grateful for the information brought to them. They would consider Cortes' request and give a definite answer later. Thereupon they dismissed the messengers and began the consideration. Opinions were divided. Some were for peace, others for war. The leader of the war party was Xikotenkatl, a young, bold, impetuous man, who was only too glad of an opportunity to draw his sword. His party was in the majority and it was decided that the messengers should be detained upon various pretences, while they were making the necessary war preparations. Eight days thus passed, and at last Cortes as well as his allies began to have misgivings as to the cause of the delay. It was finally decided to move forward and ascertain what had become of the messengers

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and their mission. The Spaniards had not gone far before they encountered a troop of armed natives who offered a stubborn resistance. A battle ensued which ended disastrously for the natives, while the Spaniards, protected by their armor, received only a few trifling wounds, though the enemy outnumbered them ten to one.

After this first victory Cortes continued advancing inland, and on the following day had the satisfaction of seeing two of his messengers approaching in the company of some Tlaxcalans. The latter placed the responsibility for the attack of the day before upon their allies, the Otomis, who had begun hostilities upon their own account and had been punished by the loss of their bravest leader. After this brief apology they took themselves off without making any definite statement of their intentions. In the meantime their mysterious conduct was soon explained, for, on the next day, as the Spaniards advanced nearer Tlaxcala, the other two messengers met them in a mournful plight. They fell at Cortes' feet weeping, embraced his knees, and with piteous gestures affirmed that the treacherous Tlaxcalans had violated the sacred right of nations and had bound them with chains to be sacrificed to their deities. In the meantime they had succeeded in freeing themselves in the night, but they were confident that the Tlaxcalans were planning to sacrifice the entire Spanish army. Cortes now knew what to expect and resolved to face the danger,

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however great it might be. He advanced at once and before long saw a countless multitude of armed Tlaxcalans and their auxiliaries with the fierce Xikotlenkatl at their head. The battle which ensued was a savage one, and a slight disaster nearly involved the destruction of Cortes' whole force. A Spanish cavalryman dashed so far into the dense ranks of the enemy that he was surrounded on all sides. He received several wounds, and his horse was pierced so often that it fell dead. The Indians cut off the animal's head, stuck it upon a spear, and carried it about triumphantly so that all might see the monster was not invulnerable, as they had believed, but was really dead.

This event inspired the Indians with indescribable courage, and they now fought with a fury which the Spaniards could no longer withstand. At the instant when their utter destruction seemed inevitable, to their great astonishment the fierce battle cries of the natives suddenly ceased, and hostilities came to an end. They heard the horns sounding for retreat and beheld the whole great army of the enemy quietly withdrawing for some mysterious reason. This was done, the prisoners afterward stated, because their foremost people had fallen, and their places could not be filled at once. Meanwhile they regarded the horse's head as their greatest trophy. Xikotlenkatl carried it off himself and sent it to the Council.

Cortes thereupon intrenched himself in a con-

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venient place and attempted once more to induce the Tlaxcalans to come to a peaceful agreement. He despatched some of the prisoners to make offers of peace as well as to warn them of the dreadful consequences they might expect in case they continued hostilities. Xikotenkatl was so furious at his offers that he mutilated the messengers shamefully and drove them back to the Spanish camp to notify the general that he would appear the next morning with a countless force, capture his entire army, and sacrifice it to his deities. The news was not very consoling, but it was accompanied by something that considerably sweetened its bitterness. Xikotenkatl at the same time sent three hundred Indian fowls and a great quantity of other provisions so as to get the enemy in good condition before he slaughtered them. The Spaniards laughed at his bombastic folly and relished the gifts which gave them fresh strength for the morrow's struggle. Xikotenkatl was as good as his word. He appeared at daybreak with a multitude of warriors, and the battle began anew with extraordinary fury on both sides. The issue for a long time seemed in doubt, but at last European skill prevailed in spite of the hordes of the enemy and their desperate courage. The Tlaxcalans gave way, and the Spaniards held the field.

But even this third defeat failed completely to daunt these warlike people. They were now more than ever convinced that the Europeans, all and

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every one of them, were wizards who could not be vanquished in the usual way and that the magic of their enemies must be thwarted by the arts of their own magicians. They had some priestly impostors who told them that with their spells they could see into the future and perform divers feats surpassing human power. They were called into Council and offered the following advice: The Spaniards are the Children of the Sun. By day their mother strengthens them with her rays and they are invincible. But at night, when the sun loses her maternal influence, their superhuman power disappears and they are no stronger than ordinary beings.

The superstitious Tlaxcalans did not doubt the truth of this for an instant and hastened to avail themselves of the discovery by making a night attack. But Cortes was too watchful and far-sighted to be surprised by such an enemy. He stationed his outposts carefully so that he might have instant intelligence of their moves and be prepared to meet them. When the Tlaxcalans made their attack they found the Spaniards already under arms and although they fought desperately they were at last driven back with great loss. These poor people were now in a state of utter perplexity. They were convinced the Spaniards were superhuman, else, how was it that in all the battles they lost thousands and the Spaniards not a single man?

But the problem which troubled them most was

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the goodness or badness of their own divinities. The first thing which impressed itself upon them was the necessity of getting rid of their deceitful sorcerers and doing away with human sacrifice. Their next step was to send an imposing delegation to pray for peace. It was composed of their most distinguished people, who went to the Spanish camp in their ceremonial dresses, adorned with white feathers, the symbol of peace, and at a distance made signs of their extreme reverence. From time to time they stopped and touched first the earth and then their lips. This ceremony was repeated several times until they reached the intrenchments, before which they burned incense and repeated the signs of reverence already described. Cortes received them with a haughty dignity, in order to impress them with dread, and ordered them to speak. They obeyed, and their first remarkable utterance was this:

“Be you cruel and vengeful divinities, we deliver to you these five slaves that you may drink their blood and eat of their flesh. Be you gentle gods, we give you an offering of incense and white feathers. Be you men, we offer you meat and bread and fruits for your nourishment.”

They further declared that they had come to ask forgiveness for the past hostility of their people and at the same time to supplicate for peace. Cortes, still retaining his haughty demeanor, bitterly reproached them for their contemptuous rejection

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of his friendly advances, but added that he was ready to forget the past if they, from that time forward, would remain quiet and make compensation for the offences they had committed. With these words he dismissed them. As soon as his answer was taken to Tlaxcala, the Council issued a general order to all the people thereabout that they should supply the camp of these wonderful strangers with subsistence and refrain from taking pay for it. The order was obeyed with a willingness and promptness which surprised the Spaniards. Two days later a great and imposing procession was seen approaching the camp from Tlaxcala. The attire of the natives showed it was peaceful of intention and Cortes ordered it to be received without the slightest hint of distrust.

At the head of this delegation was the brave Xikotenzatl, his attendants being fifty of the foremost of the people in splendid attire. He wore a long, white, military cloak which was richly adorned with feathers and precious stones. He was tall and slender, active and nervous, and his personal appearance indicated dignity and courage. After making obeisance to the Spanish commander in the fashion of the country, he seated himself in the most informal manner, without even asking permission, and declared in a manly way that he was alone responsible for the hostilities which had occurred, because he had supposed that the Spaniards were supporting Montezuma, his enemy. He sur-

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rendered himself willingly, therefore, into the hands of his conqueror, and would take upon himself all the responsibility for his acts, and asked forgiveness, and would agree to maintain peace in the name of the Council, the nobility, and the people. The city of Tlaxcala stood ready to receive Cortes and his whole army and entertain them hospitably. Cortes was delighted with the frank, bold, open-hearted manner of the young warrior and could not help expressing his esteem for him. But he did not refrain from reproaching him for the bitter opposition he had made, ending with the assurance that in a few days he would accept the invitation to go to Tlaxcala.

In the meantime messengers from Montezuma arrived with new gifts and with fresh protests against Cortes' determination to go to Mexico. Their principal object, however, was to prevent Cortes from making an alliance with the Tlaxcalans. To this end they told dreadful stories of the faithlessness of that people. Cortes, however, did not heed their warnings, being confident he had just as little reason to fear their secret plans as open hostility in the field. The Tlaxcalans were much disturbed because Cortes did not come to them immediately, and concluded that Montezuma's messengers had prejudiced him against them. To remove all grounds for suspicion the entire Council decided to go to the camp and offer themselves as hostages. The procession moved with great stateliness. All were arrayed in white garments of peace, and each one

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of the officials was borne in a kind of litter. The most conspicuous person in this dignified company was Xikotenkatl's father, a venerable old man, who was blind but still intellectually vigorous. He seated himself next to Cortes, embraced him with a noble kind of frankness, and touched his face and body to get some idea of his appearance. The speech which he made is so impressive and beautiful that it merits preservation as a sample of manly eloquence. He spoke as follows:

"Magnanimous General! Whether you are of the race of the immortals or not, you have the high Council of Tlaxcala in your power, and it gives you herewith the great symbols of its obedience. We have no desire to excuse the faults of our nation, but only express the hope that our sincerity will mitigate your anger. We have not only abandoned our purpose of making war upon you, but we have also decided to pray for peace. We know that Montezuma is seeking to secure you as an ally. But if you listen to him you must remember he is our enemy. We do not ask you to assist us against him. We are strong enough to defend ourselves, but it will grieve us if you believe his promises, for we know his deceitfulness and, although I am blind, I see a sure light revealing to me the disaster which will overtake you. You will have peace with us if Montezuma does not prevent it. Why should he restrain you? Why should you not grant our prayer? Why will you not honor our city with your presence?

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We are fully resolved either to win your friendship and confidence or to leave our freedom in your hands. Choose now which you prefer, for no middle course is of any avail to us. We must either be your good friends or your bondmen."

Who could resist such an appeal from such an old man? Cortes could not. He replied that he would grant their every wish. He asked only that they should furnish him people to carry the baggage and heavy ammunition. On the following morning six hundred burden bearers appeared who contested for the honor of carrying the heaviest loads. The entrance of the Spaniards into Tlaxcala resembled a triumph. The streets were filled with great multitudes. There was such shouting and jubilation that one could not hear himself speak. Young maidens covered the strangers with flowers. The priests appeared in their ceremonial robes and burned incense. The entire Council and the leaders of the people met them and welcomed them. Everywhere confidence, peace, and harmony prevailed. A fitting residence was ready for their sacred guest, whom they called Teules, or divinity. Cortes, as soon as he occupied it, stationed sentinels at all the approaches. This troubled the Tlaxcalans, who regarded it as a sign of distrust, but when they were informed that this was the custom of European soldiers, even in times of peace, they were no longer alarmed, and Xikotenkatl himself introduced the practice in his own army. Cortes recognized more

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and more the great advantage the friendship of this martial nation would be to him. He therefore ordered his men to treat them in a just and friendly manner, and he himself adopted every means in his power to strengthen the confidence and respect he had already gained.

Chapter VII

March to the Sacred City of Cholula — The Natives Plot the Destruction of the Spaniards — Cortes Discovers their Treachery and Slaughters Several Thousand Indians — March to Mexico — Montezuma Meets the Strangers and Escorts them to the Capital

THE Spaniards rested a little in Tlaxcala after their exertions and their life among the natives was very peaceable. Several daughters of caciques married prominent Spanish officers, and from these unions distinguished Spanish noblemen have sprung. The caciques did not offer their daughters in marriage to Cortes, for they thought he was married to Marina, or Malinace, he appeared so often in her company.

But days of rest must have an end. Cortes began preparations for the advance to Mexico with his army and an auxiliary force of six thousand brave Tlaxcalans. While thus engaged, another delegation from Montezuma appeared. They brought costly gifts upon golden platters of beautiful workmanship, and richly embroidered fabrics of linen and feather work. The messengers spoke timidly and hesitatingly. They begged Cortes not to enter

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into an alliance with the low and barbarous Tlaxcalans, but to go alone with his army to Cholula,¹ as the Emperor had given orders he should be fitly received there and his soldiers properly cared for. The Tlaxcalans regarded this invitation with suspicion. They were sure that Montezuma meditated treachery and begged Cortes not to expose himself to the danger awaiting him at Cholula. Cortes thanked his Indian friends for their solicitude, but assured them that European soldiers were not in the habit of avoiding any danger, however great it might be. He broke camp at once and marched to Cholula.

The reception he met was unusually friendly and respectful. The Tlaxcalan auxiliaries, being sworn enemies of the Cholulans, were not allowed to enter the city and were obliged to occupy a convenient spot outside the walls. They had already learned from their European friends how to intrench themselves, and they at once put their knowledge into practice. After a few days of rest, events gradually occurred which confirmed the suspicions of the Tlaxcalans. Provisions were supplied sparingly, the authorities displayed more coolness, and Montezuma's representatives had frequent interviews with them. Two Tlaxcalans shortly appeared, who had

¹ Cholula is a small town sixty miles southeast of the city of Mexico. Its principal feature is its so-called Pyramid, a lofty mound or series of mounds which was probably the site of the Indian village at the time of the conquest.

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stolen into the city in disguise and informed Cortes they had seen a multitude of women and children fleeing by night to adjacent places and that they learned from them that six young children had been sacrificed in a principal temple, — a custom always observed when any hostile movement was to be undertaken. They advised him, therefore, to be on his guard against attack. While Cortes was now using the utmost watchfulness to discover the secret purposes of the Cholulans, chance suddenly revealed the whole matter. A prominent Cholulan woman had conceived an unusual attachment for Marina, the interpreter. She was anxious to save her new friend from the universal massacre, which had been planned, and told her confidentially of the bloody designs of her people so that she might escape before it was too late. Marina, who was both shrewd and heartily devoted to the Spaniards, pretended she would follow the warnings of the Indian woman and induced her to disclose the whole plot without reserve. She learned that upon the day fixed for the massacre a force of Mexican soldiers would be concealed in the neighborhood of Cholula, for the purpose of rushing in at the appointed time, obstructing the streets by filling them with holes, lightly covered, into which horses would stumble and fall, and conveying great quantities of stones and other missiles to the roofs of houses and temples to be showered down upon the Spaniards, thus making their destruction inevitable.

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Marina hastened to bring the news to her friend Cortes and the latter lost no time in devising means to prevent the disaster which threatened him. His first step was to persuade the Indian woman and two high priests by threats and bribes to make a full confession of the plot. Then he decided to set such an example of revenge that Montezuma and his followers would never again engage in such an undertaking. To effect this, he drew up his people and the Zempoalans in battle order in the courtyard of the large building which had been assigned him as quarters. The Tlaxcalans were instructed to enter the city when they heard the first shot and under various pretences decoy the principal Cholulan leaders to the Spanish quarters where they would be arrested. Everything being arranged, Cortes gave the signal for attack and the massacre began.

The Spaniards and Zempoalans advanced, and the Tlaxcalans at the same time entered the city. Furiously they swept through the streets from all sides and countless corpses marked the course of the destroyers. The native leaders stood as if thunder-struck and hardly dared to raise their trembling hands in defence. The Mexican force advanced to protect them, but it was easily overcome. To escape the sword, they and many of the natives sought shelter in a temple. Cortes led his men there in close ranks and loudly shouted that all who would come out and surrender in good faith should be spared. Only one person availed himself of the offer,

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the rest preferring apparently to die rather than submit. Cortes then proceeded to the commission of a deed from which we turn our eyes with pity and horror and at which humanity will always shudder. He fired the temple, and the multitude of unfortunates in it were victims of the flames. This horrible massacre went on two whole days — two days of rapine, fire, and slaughter, but women and children were spared by Cortes' order. At last revenge seemed complete, the lust of plunder was satiated, and the bloody deed ended. The leaders, who had been made prisoners, were released. Cortes upbraided them for their treachery which had made the massacre necessary, and ordered them to recall the fugitive natives and restore the former order. Universal pardon was proclaimed and an idolatrous respect for the Spaniards and fear of their terrible power soon took possession of the Cholulans who had survived. In a few days the devastated city was once more crowded with natives, humbly submissive to the murderers of their kindred and destroyers of their temple.

Fourteen days had hardly passed since the entrance of the Spaniards into Cholula before Cortes decided to resume his march to the capital, without further loss of time. The army set out. Cortes was active at every spot where his presence was necessary, now in the advance, now in the rear, encouraging the weak, urging on the laggards, and striving to inspire each one with the enthusiasm he himself felt. He never

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failed to make the rounds at night to see if every one was at his post. Upon one occasion his watchfulness came near proving fatal. He came too near a sentinel who did not recognize him in the darkness and aimed his cross-bow at him. His quick outcry of the watchword for the night alone saved him.

The army advanced vigorously, and the farther it penetrated the country, the more reason Cortes had to expect a successful issue to his undertaking. Everywhere he heard complaints of Montezuma's tyranny and cruelty. Everywhere he found governors ready to shake off his yoke. The Spaniards soon left the pleasant, level country, their way leading through the mountainous region, which divides the great tablelands of Mexico and Puebla.¹ The higher they ascended, the sharper and more piercing grew the air, and the wind which swept down the frozen mountain sides made the soldiers shiver, even in their thick woollen uniforms, and benumbed the limbs of men and horses. Their road led them between two of the highest mountains of the North American continent, Popocatepetl,² or

¹ Puebla is a Mexican State of about 12,000 square miles. Its capital is La Puebla de los Angeles, the second city in the Republic. It was the scene of many struggles during the conquest, and of revolts in the last century. The capital derives its name from the legend that angel hosts were seen in the heavens above its site before the conquest.

² Popocatepetl is a volcano forty-five miles southeast of the Mexican capital. Its crater is 5000 feet in width and the peak is 17,853 feet high. It is called the "smoking mountain," from *popoca*, "to smoke," and *tepetl*, "mountain."

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"Smoking Mountain," and Iztaccihuatl,¹ or the "White Lady." The natives held the former mountain sacred to their divinities and for this reason had never made an attempt to ascend it, but the mysterious dread with which the place was invested and the unconquerable love of adventure made some of the Spanish knights eager to accomplish a feat which the natives considered impossible and involving the lives of those who attempted it. Cortes encouraged them for he was anxious to convince the Indians that his followers never flinched from any danger. A captain, Ordaz by name, nine Spaniards, and some of the Tlaxcalans, who had plucked up courage by this time, undertook the ascent. After overcoming many obstacles and dangers, they reached the height of thirteen thousand feet. At this point the Indians, alarmed by a strange subterranean rumbling of the volcano, would go no farther. The Europeans, however, advanced to the vicinity of the crater, but the smoke, sparks, and ashes from the burning interior forced them to return.

The army continued its march among hills and through ravines. After great exertions a sight met their eyes which compensated them for their trials and filled them all with delight. A vast and beautiful country lay before them, and in the

¹ Iztaccihuatl is an extinct volcano north of Popocatepetl, about 17,000 feet high. It derives the name of "the white lady" because its west side bears some resemblance to a woman in a white shroud.

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midst of it a lake, which looked like the sea. Along this lake were many stately cities and towns, and in their midst the queen of them all, the far-away glistening capital, splendid with its many temples and towers.¹ They had reached the valley of Mexico, or Tenochtitlan,² as the natives call it. At first view of this magnificent region the astonished Europeans stood as if uncertain whether they were awake or dreaming. All their past dangers disappeared like mists vanishing before the sun, and they were ready now for anything that might happen. Cortes observed their enthusiasm with delight and cautiously advanced along the shore of the lake toward the stately capital.

Suddenly a great crowd of people appeared coming from the capital toward them. There were over a thousand, evidently persons of distinction as they wore elegant cloaks and tufts of feathers. They approached the Spanish army in respectful stillness, and each of them displayed his deepest reverence for the general, as they informed him that Montezuma himself was drawing near. The vanguard of the capital next appeared, two hundred

¹ The City of Mexico at the time of the conquest was in all its splendor and, as described by Cortes, "a thing of fairy creation rather than the work of mortal hands." It was about twelve miles in circumference, intersected by canals, and connected with the mainland by six causeways. The lake has diminished in depth and extent and is now two and a half miles away from the city.

² "Tenochtitlan" (*nopal* or *cactus on a stone*) was the original name of the city, afterward changed to "Mexico" in honor of the war god Mexitli.

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in number, uniformly costumed and decorated with feathers. These came barefooted in pairs, and, as soon as they reached the head of the Spanish army, stationed themselves so as to afford a view of the glistening ranks of court attendants in whose midst Montezuma¹ himself was conspicuous in a golden sedan chair. Four of the leading personages of the Empire bore it upon their shoulders. Others held a beautifully constructed canopy over him, which seemed to be made of some fine material embroidered with silver and adorned with green feathers. In advance of this brilliant procession went three magisterial persons with golden staves which they raised ceremoniously from time to time. At this signal all prostrated themselves and covered their faces as if they were unworthy to look upon the person of their exalted monarch.

As soon as the procession was sufficiently near, Cortes dismounted from his horse and hastened to pay his respects to the monarch. The latter at the same time stepped from his chair and rested, leaning upon the shoulders of two princes, then advanced with slow and stately stride to meet the dreaded stranger, walking upon carpets which his followers laid down so that his feet should not touch the

¹ Montezuma, in Aztec Matenczoma, was born in 1479. He was the son of Axayacatl and succeeded his uncle in 1503. Some of his descendants are said to be living in Mexico now, and his name is still held in great respect among the Indians.

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ground. Cortes met him cordially and greeted him with a low bow after the European manner. Montezuma replied to the greeting with an obeisance which in his country was significant of the highest respect. He kissed his own hand and then touched the ground with it. This condescension from the proudest of monarchs, who was accustomed to greet even the images of his divinities with a careless nod of the head, greatly astonished the Mexicans and induced the conviction that these strangers were divine and not human beings. The word "Teules" (gods) was constantly on their lips. Cortes wore over his armor a necklace set with paste stones which he intended to give the Emperor. As soon as the ceremony of greeting was over, he took this false ornament and hung it about the neck of Montezuma. The Emperor appeared pleased at this attention and ordered one of his own costly ornaments to be brought—a necklace of very rare shells, from each of which on both sides depended four golden crabs. He handed this decoration to his guest, which still further increased the astonishment of his people.

Montezuma appeared to be about forty years of age. He was of medium size and rather thin. He had a very majestic appearance, a pleasing countenance, and in color was not so brownish yellow as the rest of the Mexicans. He wore a long cloak of fine woollen stuff which was literally covered with ornaments, pearls, and gems. A golden crown, much resembling a bishop's mitre, comprised his head-



*M*EETING OF CORTES AND MONTEZUMA



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dress. His shoes were made of solid gold plates fastened with straps and gold buckles.

The entry was now made with his guest. The city was large and populous. According to the Spanish historians it had twenty thousand flat houses or adobes and a multitude of temples and palaces which in size and splendor exceeded anything ever seen before in the New World. One of the largest of these so-called palaces was assigned to Cortes as his headquarters, and Montezuma accompanied him there. As soon as they arrived he left, in order to have time for rest, as he said, and, as he was going away, begged Cortes to make himself as much at home as if he were among his own brethren.

Cortes stationed sentinels as usual and placed cannon at all the approaches to the palace and ordered his officers and soldiers not to relax their vigilance.

Chapter VIII

*Religious Rites of the Mexicans — Human Sacrifices —
The Natives Discover that the Spaniards are not Divine
but Human*

ON the evening of the same day Montezuma and his brilliant retinue returned to make the first visit to their much honored guest. As soon as Cortes was notified of his approach, he went to the courtyard, received him with a low bow, and conducted him to his apartment. The Mexican Emperor seated himself familiarly and requested the general to be seated also. His attendants ranged themselves at the side of the room and the Spaniards did the same. Marina, the interpreter, was stationed near by, and the Emperor began a ceremonious address, in which he made a strenuous effort to remove any prejudice which Cortes might entertain against him, growing out of harmful reports. "Some have said," he stated, "that I belong to the immortal gods, others have striven to calumniate me, representing me as a haughty and cruel tyrant. The first of these reports is as false as the other. The refutation of the one will expose the falsity of the other." With these words, he bared his arm and requested Cortes to convince himself by sight and touch that he was made of

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flesh and blood like other men — a fact of which Cortes had no doubt. After this he continued his assurances that the reports of his tyranny, with which his enemies had sought to prejudice Cortes against him, were unfounded. After these preliminaries he expressed his sentiments as to the arrival of the Spaniards and the object of their visit in the following words:

“We know from traditions which have come down to us from old times that our ancestors came from a distant region and conquered those countries which are to-day subject to my authority. Their leader was the great Quetzalcoatl,¹ who, after he had established our Empire, left this part of the world again to take possession of other regions toward the east. But he prophesied that some time a people descended from him would come to us and change our laws and whole system of government. Now I see from all that has been told of your coming here, and from what I myself have observed, that you are the descendants of that great ancestor. For this reason I have received you not as strangers but as kindred, and declare to you that we recognize you as the representative of the great Eastern ruler and that your authority will not be disputed by me or my people.”

¹ Quetzalcoatl in the Mexican religion represents the god of the air, and in legend a ruler and civilizer. He is described as a white man with long black hair and beard, who came from Yucatan and preached austerity and virtue as well as hatred of war. His name means “the feathered serpent.”

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Cortes rejoiced at this news which was favorable to his intentions. He confirmed the superstitious Montezuma in his belief and satisfied him that the prophecy of the great Quetzalcoatl had been fulfilled and that he and his Spaniards were his descendants. "In the meantime," he added, "while it is evident that the exalted monarch of the East, whose most humble servant I have the honor to be, has a just claim upon all your countries, yet he is too far away personally to assert his claim. He only desires of you and your people that you shall abandon your errors and accept the true faith which he has commissioned me to announce. You are living under a false religion. You are worshipping senseless blocks, made by your own hands. There is but one true God, and He has created and governs everything that is. This one Being, who is without beginning and without end, has made out of nothing the whole universe, the flaming sun which shines upon all, the earth and all that is in it, and the first man, from whom we are all descended. We are all obliged to recognize the First Cause of all things, and for that reason the King, my master, invites you, great Emperor, and all your people to accept these sentiments and maintain affectionate and brotherly relations with him. He desires you to enter into a friendly alliance which will always be of great advantage to you."

Montezuma was visibly excited by Cortes' address. It was so intolerable to hear his deities insulted that

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it was with difficulty he could restrain his impatience until Cortes ended. Then he arose somewhat hastily and replied that while he gratefully accepted the offer of friendly relations with a prince descended from Quetzalcoatl, these relations might be maintained without giving up his own deities for the God whom the Spaniards worshipped. With these words he closed the interview and, after bestowing some costly gifts, made his way back to his palace.

On the next day, accompanied by his leading officers, Cortes went with much ceremony for another interview with the Emperor. This one lasted longer than the first. Montezuma asked a hundred questions about the European mode of life, habits, and customs, but Cortes, who had not these matters so much at heart as the work of conversion, seized every opportunity to give the conversation a religious turn, and specially inveighed against the cruel custom of human sacrifices. At the close of the interview Montezuma exhibited to his guests the splendors of the temples. He conducted them to the largest of these, and the priests offered no objection to their admission upon condition that nothing unseemly should be done. Montezuma himself exhibited and explained everything to them. He told the names of the deities, the highest of which was called Bitzliputzli, and described the worship which was paid to each of them. As these heathenish rites were inexpressibly shocking, Cortes asked permission to place the Cross of Christ in

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the temple, thinking that it would soon convince them that their deities were powerless. Montezuma listened to the proposal with the greatest displeasure, and the priests with amazement. The Emperor soon recovered his composure, however, and merely replied that he had expected his guests would show the same respect for the place where they were that they had shown to him. With these words he passed out, telling the Spaniards they were at liberty to repair to their own quarters, but as for himself he would remain to ask pardon of his deities for his extraordinary patience.

The natives of Mexico professed a horrible religion, of which human sacrifice was the principal feature. They often made war upon neighboring people for no other purpose than to capture prisoners to be slaughtered upon their altars and afterward eaten. During battle they spared the lives of their enemies, saving them for a more terrible death by the knives of the priests. The number of these unfortunate victims sometimes reached thousands in a single day. Some historians have placed it as high as twenty-five thousand. If the nation were at peace for a long time and no prisoners were available for offerings, the priests would notify the Emperor that the deities were suffering from hunger. As soon as the Emperor's proclamation spread the news through the country that the deities were ready for a banquet, it was the signal for a general war upon their

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neighbors. Then as soon as a sufficient number of prisoners had been collected, the priests began their hideous business. It cannot be denied that the various calamities which befell the natives at the hands of the tyrannical Europeans were a very great wrong, but, as compared with the terrible cruelties practised before their arrival, it must be acknowledged that these unfortunate people upon the whole gained more than they lost by submission to the Spanish yoke.

Cortes' delight over the successful progress of his undertaking up to this time was now disturbed by reflections upon the dangerous situation into which he had so recklessly plunged. He realized all too clearly that he had ventured more than he might be able to carry out, and that the fate of himself and his army rested in the hands of a prince whose real intentions seemed to grow more and more mysterious. The Tlaxcalans from the beginning had not ceased to warn him that Montezuma's object in receiving him in his capital was to catch him in a trap from which there was no way of escape. The disposition of this ruler and the peculiar situation of his capital lent probability to these warnings. Should they destroy the causeways located along the lake, which were the only approaches to the city, he saw that he would be completely cut off from the rest of the world and surrounded by a multitude against whose superior numbers neither his courage nor his weapons might be of any avail.

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In this emergency a very unpleasant event had occurred at Vera Cruz, of which Cortes received information shortly before this time.

Quauhpopoka, one of the Mexican generals, after Cortes' departure for that region, determined to punish those people who had revolted and placed themselves under the protection of the Spaniards. Escalante, the governor of Vera Cruz, considered himself bound to assist his allies. At the head of his little band and with the two remaining horses he offered battle. He held his ground, but he himself and seven others were fatally wounded. The most unfortunate event of the battle was the killing of one of the horses and the capture of one of his men. The Mexicans killed their prisoner at once and sent his head to various cities as a proof that the Spaniards were not immortal. At last their trophy reached the capital. Cortes, who naturally was disturbed by the dangers confronting him, spent that night in earnest consideration of methods to escape them. Toward morning he summoned some of his faithful Tlaxcalans to ascertain just what they had seen or heard of Montezuma's secret designs. Their statements confirmed his suspicions as well as his determination to carry out the plan he had settled upon. They specially informed him that the leading officials had acted mysteriously for several days, that the head of a Spaniard had been sent among the provinces, and that Montezuma had issued orders to conceal it. Finally they declared they had heard

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that preparations were already being made to destroy the causeways.

This was enough for Cortes. His decision was made, and he endeavored to convince his officers that there was no other way of escape except that which he had planned.

Chapter IX

Montezuma is Made a Prisoner—Quauhpopoka and His Leaders Burned—The Mexicans Swear Allegiance to the King of Spain

CORTES summoned his officers to a council of war and set before them the great danger to which they would be exposed in case Montezuma attacked them. They recognized at once that the situation must be met. Some were of opinion they should leave the city entirely and cross the causeways before their road was cut off. Others suggested that they should retire with the knowledge of the Emperor. Both these measures, however, appeared unwise, since any withdrawal would seem like flight and would involve not only a battle with the Mexicans but also the contempt of their allies. Cortes announced a plan, inspired by the highest daring in the face of a desperate situation. He would make Montezuma a prisoner, leaving him an appearance of sovereignty, but actually ruling in his name. The deed of Quauhpopoka, for which the Emperor was responsible, would furnish justification for his imprisonment. After the council had approved this project, preparations were made to carry it out. The whole force

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was placed under arms in the closed courtyard in readiness at the first signal to go to the help of the general. Some small detachments were ordered to occupy the streets leading to Montezuma's palace, which would not create excitement, as the people were used to seeing armed Spaniards. When the hour came in which Cortes was accustomed to wait upon the Emperor, he betook himself with five officers and thirty of the bravest men in his army to the palace. This also aroused no suspicion, for a military escort was a common spectacle.

Cortes as usual was courteously received and was conducted to Montezuma's apartment with his officers and interpreter. The servants withdrew and the venturesome scene began. With a countenance expressive of the highest indignation Cortes denounced the faithless act of Quauhpopoka, who, at a time of peace, and in defiance of justice, had attacked his people and allies, inhumanly slaughtered a Spaniard, and sent his head through the country as a show. He added that report made Montezuma himself responsible for this and therefore he was forced to demand satisfaction for the insult which had been offered to his master, the greatest monarch of the earth.

Montezuma was so terrified that he turned pale, but he declared by all that was most sacred he was in no way responsible for the outrage. As a proof of his innocence he added that he would at once order Quauhpopoka and his accomplices to be brought to

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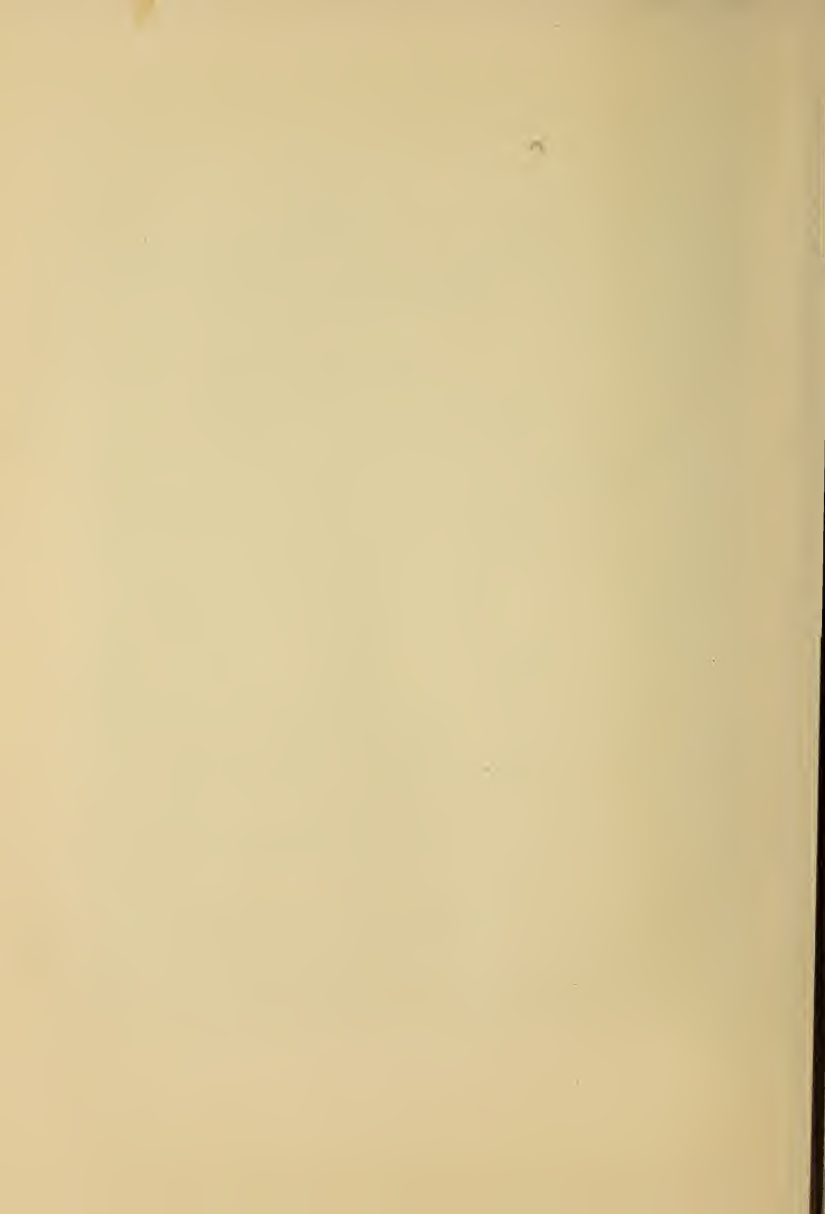
Mexico in chains. Cortes thereupon assumed a more friendly attitude and assured Montezuma that as far as he himself was concerned he was entirely content, but to satisfy his enraged soldiers he would have to demand more. They would never be persuaded that such a deed could have happened without the Emperor's knowledge if he did not agree publicly to prove his good faith and sincere friendship. The proof which they demanded was his presence for several days in their quarters where they might offer fitting honors to His Majesty.

Montezuma was beside himself with astonishment and indignation at this unusual demand. He was unable to speak and stood like a statue, while Cortes represented to him that this request of his soldiers was not unseemly as he would spend the time in quarters assigned to him in one of his own palaces. At last the astonished man came to himself and found words to express his indignation. With great dignity he said: "A sovereign of the Mexican Empire is not accustomed voluntarily to accept imprisonment, and, even if I were capable of it, my subjects would never submit to such shameful treatment."

Cortes, who was reluctant to use force, both flattered and threatened Montezuma to induce him to give his consent, but it was in vain. At last, after three hours had been wasted in useless talk, Velasquez De Leon, one of the Spanish officers, a young, excitable man, whose patience was exhausted, exclaimed with threatening gestures: "Why



*M*ONTEZUMA THE CAPTIVE OF THE SPANIARDS



MONTEZUMA MADE PRISONER

all this consideration? Take him by force or kill him." Montezuma asked what he had said. Marina informed him and added that she trembled for his life if he refused to go. The poor man at once lost all courage. He realized that he was in the power of strong men and that he must expect the worst if he longer refused. He yielded to his fate, sprang from his seat, and informed Cortes he trusted to his assurances and would go with him.

Thereupon he called together his leading officials and informed them that for important reasons he should spend a few days with his guest. They were greatly astonished but did not venture to offer the least objection to the absolute will of their master. They carried the litter in which the unfortunate monarch was borne away from his own people, a prisoner under Spanish guard. Hardly was his removal known in the city before the streets were filled with crowds. Some shrieked, others wept, others threw themselves upon the ground as if in their last despairing agony. But Montezuma tried to calm them. He appeared with a smiling countenance, motioned to them with his hand, and assured them he was not a prisoner. He was voluntarily going to visit this guest for a few days. This quieted them somewhat, and the Spaniards proceeded without hindrance to their quarters with their prisoner. Montezuma went to an apartment he was accustomed to occupy and the attendants treated him with the utmost respect, as their general

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had ordered. His first act was to send an order in Cortes' presence to his body-guard, to bring Quauhpopoka and the rest of the guilty ones in chains to the city.

In due time Quauhpopoka, his son, and five of his principal people were brought to Mexico. Cortes called a council of war and the unfortunates were condemned to be burned alive. As soon as the decision was made, in order to humble this submissive monarch to the utmost and make a mockery of his former power, Cortes, in sight of all the people, arbitrarily emptied Montezuma's arsenal of the great quantity of spears, shields, and other weapons kept there, in order to make a pyre of it upon which to burn the victims, who were not guilty of crime for they had only done what their master had ordered. The weapons collected for the protection of the Empire were heaped up. A countless multitude of dazed spectators stood there, not knowing what to say or do. The awful sacrifice was made.

At the same instant Cortes, accompanied by several officers and a soldier carrying iron fetters, went to Montezuma's apartment. He approached the terrified monarch and fiercely thundered at him that he was the malefactor, for he was the author of the outrages perpetrated by these victims. Hardly had he spoken these words when he turned his back upon the man fallen so low from his former high estate, and the soldier placed the fetters upon the

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Emperor. Montezuma stood speechless, helpless, almost senseless. At last he broke into a loud wail, evidently expecting they would immediately lead him also to the place of punishment. But what made this piteous scene most touching was the demeanor of his faithful attendants, who prostrated themselves in silent grief at his feet, bedewing them with their tears. They raised his fetters to lighten their weight and placed little pieces of soft cloth between the iron and his skin that his precious limbs might not feel the pressure. It was a sight to bring tears of sympathy to the eyes of the most hard-hearted spectator.

The punishment having been inflicted, Cortes approached Montezuma in a friendly manner and said that justice was satisfied. With these words he ordered his fetters taken off. The distracted and humiliated monarch was wellnigh overcome with delight. He embraced his oppressor over and over as he expressed his gratitude for his release. The unfortunate monarch in his excess of joy seemed to forget that the fetters taken from him now might soon be fastened more firmly than ever.

Cortes now made one bold move after another to bring the Mexican people into complete subjection. He sent some of his officers through the country, partly to learn the extent and nature of each province and partly to discover the places where gold and silver were to be found. He also persuaded Montezuma, under various pretences, to remove the ablest

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and most courageous of his officials and appoint in their places weak and unintelligent men who could easily be managed by the Spaniards. Then he made a last humiliating demand in his efforts to crush Montezuma's proud spirit. It was that he should publicly acknowledge himself a vassal of the Spanish King and bind himself to pay an annual tribute as a sign of his subjection. What could Montezuma do? His liberty, his life, were in the hands of Cortes. He realized that he must concede every demand, however exacting.

He summoned the notables of his Empire, reminded them of the old prophecy which was now fulfilled, and announced that from now on he and his Empire were subject to the great King of the East to whom sovereignty had descended from their common ancestor. With these words, the tears came to his eyes, showing how great was the sacrifice he was making. There was a low murmur among the assembled Mexicans. Astonishment and indignation were visible on every face, and they appeared ready to maintain the rights of the Empire and their sovereign by force. But Cortes allayed their anger and prevented any outbreak by assuring them his master had no intention of taking his Empire from Montezuma but would be contented to become its protector. This assurance as well as their Emperor's demeanor quieted them, and the ceremonies which the Spaniards had arranged to

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make Montezuma's subjection the more impressive were completed without interruption. Montezuma confirmed his allegiance by making a handsome gift and ordered the caciques of his country to do the same.

Chapter X

Division of the Spoils — Cortes Attempts to Introduce Christianity — Narvaez is Sent by Velasquez to Depose Cortes — Cortes Advances against Him

NOW that mighty Mexico had become a Spanish Province, Cortes next proceeded to allot the collected spoils. They were divided into five parts. One was assigned to the King of Spain; the second to himself, as commander; the third was set apart as indemnity for those who had paid for their own equipment; and the remainder was given to the army. The share for each soldier and sailor was not as large as had been expected, which caused general dissatisfaction, but Cortes promptly quieted them by presenting them with a part of the treasure which properly belonged to him.

The unfortunate Montezuma, as we have seen, had conceded all the demands made upon him, but to the great surprise of Cortes there was one which he firmly and steadfastly declined to yield. This was the abandonment of the religious belief of himself and his people. Neither flattery nor threats moved him. Cortes, no longer able to endure its hideous cruelties, went to Montezuma with some of his officers and demanded that room should be made

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for the Christian service in the principal temple. Montezuma was greatly surprised at the demand and replied that the Mexicans would never permit such a desecration of their temple, that resistance would be made, and much bloodshed would result, so great was their fear of the wrath of their deities. But when Cortes announced he would be satisfied if one tower were set apart for the Christian service, Montezuma answered that he would consult the priests about the matter. Their decision was favorable, and the use of one of the sacred towers was granted. The news occasioned great joy in the Spanish quarters. The sacred place was cleared of its revolting impurities, an altar was erected with a cross and image of the Virgin upon it, and the walls were newly decorated. The soldiers entered in festal procession, the mass was heard, and the *Te Deum* sung with tears of gratitude. Thus the sweet tones of divine love and mercy mingled with the wild songs of the Indian priests in honor of Anahuak, a war god.

This unnatural situation could not long continue. The Mexicans were greatly outraged because their religion was trodden under foot. They realized more clearly than ever the haughty insolence of these strangers, and they began to consider plans for their removal. The priests and leading men, who were present at private interviews with the imprisoned Emperor more frequently than of late, implored revenge for their insulted deities, and Montezuma's

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condition thus grew more dangerous and distressed. What should he do? Whither should he turn? At last he aroused himself and decided to take a middle course which wisdom pointed out as the safest. With this object in view, he summoned Cortes. The latter, whose suspicions had already been aroused by these private interviews of the priests and leading men with Montezuma, took the precaution of having twelve of his bravest men accompany him. His suspicions were confirmed when he entered Montezuma's apartment and observed a seriousness of expression on his face which he had never seen before. He was still more surprised when Montezuma seized his hand, drew him aside, and in an almost menacing tone said to him that, as the object for which his master had sent him was now accomplished, he hoped he would hasten his departure.

At this unexpected reply, and moved still more by the dark look and decisive manner which accompanied it, Cortes turned to his men and quietly ordered them to have the entire force under arms at once. Then with the utmost composure and indifference of manner he turned to Montezuma and replied that there was nothing he wished more heartily than to return to his fatherland, but, as all his vessels were destroyed, he must build others and would have to request the necessary assistance. Montezuma could not conceal his delight. He embraced Cortes, overwhelmed him with caresses, and

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assured him that his declaration would satisfy his priests and his subjects, both of whom were desirous the strangers should leave. Cortes now clearly ascertained the sentiment of the priests and the people, and came to the conclusion that the only way he could evade the danger threatening him and his plans was by continual dissimulation. He accordingly publicly ordered the construction of new vessels, secretly instructing the ship-carpenters, however, to protract the work in every possible way, in hopes that the reinforcements he was expecting from Spain would arrive in the meantime. But truly, as if the punishment of heaven were following close upon his dishonest conduct, an event shortly occurred which plunged all his plans into desperate confusion. Montezuma hastily summoned him and showed him a picture, painted in the Mexican style upon white calico, of eighteen European vessels. The picture had been brought to the Emperor by swift runners with the news that these vessels were lying at anchor on his coasts.

Cortes was delighted at this news, for it inspired the hope that these vessels had brought the confirmation from Spain of his appointment as governor of the newly discovered country. But to his great astonishment he learned several days later from Sandoval, the governor at Vera Cruz, that the fleet which had arrived was sent out by Velasquez for no other purpose than to capture him and take him to Cuba for trial. As we know, Cortes had sent one

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of his vessels to Spain with samples of the rich products of Mexico, and at the same time to secure his appointment. Montejo and Puertocarrero, the commanders of this vessel, had received explicit orders not to touch at the island of Cuba. They were to leave the island as far to their right as possible and sail around the point of Florida through the Bahamian Straits. But Montejo, who had property in Cuba, was so far forgetful of his duty to his superior as to attempt a visit to his possessions before sailing to Spain. He hardly reached the coast before Velasquez received news of his appearance. Velasquez' wrath was kindled anew. He despatched two strong vessels for the purpose of capturing Cortes' vessel with all on board, but luckily they received warning in time to effect their escape and sail for Spain without interference.

Velasquez was now more furious than ever. He decided to fit out a powerful squadron, hunt out Cortes, and make him feel his vengeance. While preparing his expedition he received news from Spain that Cortes' vessel had safely arrived, and also learned just where Cortes was and the success of his operations up to that time. The equipment was pushed forward with redoubled vigor. The fleet consisted of eighteen vessels, carrying nine hundred foot-soldiers, eighteen troopers, and twelve cannon. It was a formidable force for those days and outnumbered Cortes' army two to one. Everything completed, Narvaez, a very bold, passionate,

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implacable man, was made commander with the title of deputy-governor of the countries discovered by Cortes. He sailed from Cuba in March, 1520. It was toward the end of April when Cortes heard the news of the arrival. He now found himself in a critical position which grew more dangerous every day. Should he venture to oppose a European force twice as strong as his own? Should he remain in Mexico? In that case he would be exposed to attack from two formidable enemies at the same time, for it was more than likely that as soon as the Mexicans found he was in danger they would immediately rush to arms against him. In this state of uncertainty he received reports every day, each more disquieting than the other. He found that some of his soldiers were deserting to Narvaez and acquainting him with everything he wished to know. He heard that Narvaez was everywhere proclaiming that Cortes and all his men were traitors, who had undertaken the subjection of the Mexicans without the knowledge or consent of their sovereign; and that he had been sent to capture them and take them back in chains for punishment. Montezuma and the whole suffering nation were urged to make common cause with him and aid in the capture of this robber band. It may easily be imagined that this was delightful news to Montezuma and his oppressed subjects. Their joy and their willingness to aid Narvaez were apparent everywhere. Cortes meanwhile in the most positive manner denied the

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reports which Narvaez had circulated, and assured the Mexicans these Europeans were his good friends, subjects of one and the same master, and that he and his men would soon depart with them. But indifferent as Cortes appeared, he was in reality greatly troubled. Meanwhile he considered every plan of escape from these dangers which his ingenuity suggested, and at last reached a decision which seemed to him both reasonable and bold. He would first discover whether he could make a friendly agreement with Narvaez, and if he failed, then he would resist him.

He made the attempt but did not succeed. The impetuous Narvaez would not hear of any agreement, for he esteemed it an easy matter to overpower Cortes and his little force. Nothing now remained for Cortes but to defend himself as well as he could, and he made his preparations to do so. He appointed Alvarado, a brave officer who was highly esteemed by the Mexicans, as commander at the capital and leader of one hundred and fifty men whom he decided to leave behind. He explicitly urged them to conduct themselves quietly and peaceably during his absence and to treat Montezuma respectfully as he had promised to remain under Spanish protection until Cortes returned.

The bold man was now ready with this little remnant of his divided force to meet an enemy who not only greatly exceeded him in strength but was greatly embittered against him.

Chapter XI

Cortes Defeats Narvaez — Meanwhile the Mexicans, Outraged by Alvarado, Rise in Revolt — Cortes Returns

NARVAEZ had advanced to Zempoala. Sandoval, meanwhile, confiding the colony at Vera Cruz to the protection of the allies, hastened to unite his force with that of Cortes. They met at a spot about twelve miles distant from Zempoala, and numbered, all told, not more than two hundred and fifty men. Cortes steadily advanced upon Zempoala until he was only a mile away, and Narvaez, who had the utmost contempt for him, deciding to give battle at once, advanced to meet him with his greatly superior force. A fierce rain storm occurred that day, and Cortes had so well chosen a position on the opposite side of a swollen stream that Narvaez did not discover him. The latter's soldiers murmured and protested there was no enemy in the vicinity. "What is the use," they exclaimed, "of staying here to fight the elements? There is no enemy here and nothing to fear in such stormy weather. Let us return to Zempoala and be ready in the morning to defeat the enemy if he appears." Narvaez, who was not at all disinclined to follow their suggestion, returned,

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gave the necessary instructions for their safety, and then displayed the most utter negligence, as if no enemy were near. His soldiers, many of whom were not yet accustomed to the hardships of the march, were delighted with the arrangements and were equally negligent. Cortes, believing that Narvaez' contempt for him, and the fatigue of his not yet hardened soldiers, would lead them to be off their guard, decided to make a night attack. He drew up his little army, explained his purpose, and found to his great delight that it was not at all necessary to encourage them in this venturesome task as all expressed their greatest willingness to follow him. The army was divided into three detachments, one led by Sandoval, one by Olid, and the other by Cortes himself.

It was one of the darkest and most inhospitable nights imaginable. The swollen stream rushed along like a mountain torrent, and there was no way of crossing it except by fording. Cortes was the first to plunge in, and his men followed him with enthusiastic alacrity. The water was up to their necks, but all save two men safely reached the other side. The dripping soldiers formed in order and marched to Zempoala in death-like stillness, each carrying a sword, a dagger, and a long Indian spear. The spear was for use against the enemy's cavalry. Cortes' conjectures were confirmed. Narvaez was so unconcerned that he had placed only two sentinels on guard. One of these was surprised and taken

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prisoner, the other escaped and fled to the city in a panic of fear to give the alarm. Narvaez' contempt for his enemy was so great that he declared the sentinel had been dreaming and that it was ridiculous to imagine that Cortes would dare to attack him voluntarily with a handful of men.

Suddenly he heard the battle cry as Cortes and his men hurled themselves upon the city like a thunderstorm, terror following in their wake. Too late Narvaez realized his foolish error, but he hastened as fast as he could to rally his men. He and his troops were quartered in and around a great temple which the enemy stormed so quickly and irresistibly that only a single cannon could be used against them. Sandoval, who commanded the advance, captured the cannon and drove the enemy helter-skelter up the temple steps. The struggle was a desperate one. Narvaez, who was in the temple, sought to rally his men and inspire them with the example of his own courage, but Sandoval continued driving them before him. Olid supported him, and Cortes, who forgot for the moment that he was the commander, sprang to the front and inspired his men with his own daring. A soldier in Cortes' troops suddenly discovered that fire had broken out among the reeds on the roof of the temple. The building was immediately in flames and Narvaez found himself forced to leave. He strove at the head of his men to make his way out, but a spear was thrust in his eye and he fell. Sandoval seized him,

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dragged him down the stairs quickly, bound him, and bore him to a place of safety in the rear. The victors raised a triumphant shout, and the enemy, now without a leader, became so panic-stricken that their resistance grew weaker and weaker. A general holocaust would have been inevitable had not Cortes offered pardon to all who should come out and surrender. Narvaez' men had seen a countless number of little flickering lights in the darkness of the night, which resembled matches, and which led them to believe Cortes had a large force of arquebusiers posted in the thickets, for fire-arms at that time were always discharged by matches. This fancy—for these lights were made by glow-worms—increased the alarm of the enemy, and at last no further resistance was made.

The victory was complete. While the air was full of the shouts of the victors Cortes seated himself and, after throwing a richly embroidered cloak about his shoulders, received the congratulations of his officers and soldiers. He graciously permitted the common soldiers to kiss his hand, paid special distinction to the officers, and cordially greeted those of the enemy who had once been his friends. Indeed he treated them in such a considerate manner that those who but a short time since had fought against him became his friends. In this way his little army was increased by the addition of eight hundred fresh and well-armed soldiers, an increase which secured for him the most powerful army yet seen

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in that part of the world. As soon as the wounded Narvaez came to himself it was with a deadly feeling of humiliation that he found himself chained hand and foot and in the power of the enemy for whom he had had so much contempt. Cortes desired to see him without his knowledge so that he might not seem to be gloating over his misfortune, but as soon as he entered the room the respect shown by the soldiers in attendance betrayed his presence. The proud Narvaez turned to him and said: "Señor Cortes, you have cause to congratulate yourself upon the good luck which has made me your prisoner." Such haughtiness seemed to need some reproof, so Cortes replied: "All that God does is well done; meanwhile, I assure you that I consider the victory just won and your capture as among my slightest achievements." Cortes kept him bound and had him taken to Vera Cruz.

Hardly had Cortes enjoyed a few hours of rejoicing over his quick and glorious victory than his attention was directed to fresh dangers which had arisen, like a distant storm, in another place. Messengers came from Mexico with the unpleasant news that the people of the city had risen in revolt and attacked the Spaniards left behind, and that Alvarado was trying to protect himself against them in his stronghold. Montezuma himself had sent one of his people to implore Cortes to return as quickly as possible and put down the uprising. The danger was so great and threatening that Cortes lost no time in going

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to the rescue of his people. After he had provided for the safety of the vessels by manning them with his own crews, he placed himself at the head of his now formidable army and marched as rapidly as possible through Tlaxcala to the capital. The faithful Tlaxcalans offered to reinforce him with their entire war power, but he contented himself by taking only two thousand men and giving them hearty thanks for their steadfast loyalty. His march was made in a cautious manner but his good fortune and the simplicity of the Mexicans made caution superfluous. It would have been easy to cut off his return to the capital by destroying the causeways, but the Mexicans were either too stupid or too timorous to do it. Cortes found them just as he had left them, and nothing stood in the way of his entrance into the city. This occurred June 24, 1520.

But how different was the manner of this from his first entrance! This time there was no one to receive him, no one who looked on in astonishment, no one who raised a cry of joy. All was silent in the deserted streets, and none of Alvarado's soldiers was seen until the Spanish quarters were reached. Then there were cordial greetings on both sides, embraces, and exultant shouts without end. Alvarado and his men were delighted at their unexpected deliverance from an appalling danger. Cortes and his companions were overjoyed with the double pleasure of victory and meeting their companions,

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and Montezuma himself, who had kept his promise not to leave the Spanish quarters, appeared to sympathize with the delight of his oppressors.

Cortes now learned all that had taken place during his absence. Infuriated by their treatment at the hands of the malicious Spaniards, the Mexicans had rushed to arms. Alvarado gave his consent for a celebration in honor of Pitzliputzli if they would appear at the temple unarmed. As the Mexicans, among them several hundred of their prominent men, were engaged in the ceremonies the Spaniards fell upon them and murdered many. The survivors were infuriated. Neither their own danger nor that of their imprisoned sovereign deterred them from attacking the Spanish quarters with such fierceness that Alvarado and his little band had difficulty in protecting themselves. Then two vessels were burned, four Spaniards killed, and several wounded. The rest expected their destruction, but a few days before Cortes' arrival the Mexicans suddenly ceased hostilities and remained quiet. With his extraordinary force, and considering the extreme awe with which the Mexicans regarded him, it would undoubtedly have been easy for him to have put down the uprising at once. But his methods of administration were now changed. Intoxicated with the astonishing good fortune which had accompanied his every move, he regarded each new danger with the utmost contempt and did not even consider it worth while any longer to conceal

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his intentions. From this time on he utterly disregarded Montezuma and so far abandoned his previous prudence as to pay no attention to the just indignation of these outraged people.

Chapter XII

The Mexicans Rise against the Spaniards and Fight with Desperate Courage — Montezuma is Killed — Cortes Struggles Bravely and is in Danger of his Life

CORTES flattered himself it would be an easy task to hold the mutinous Mexicans in check by force. Thinking thus, he sent one of his bravest officers, Ordaz by name, with a corps of four hundred men, partly Spaniards, partly Tlaxcalans, to ascertain whether the people had really quieted down or were making preparations for new attacks. In pursuance of his duty, Ordaz marched through the city streets but had not gone far before he encountered a body of armed Mexicans. In order to intercept some of them he incautiously advanced upon them, but they at once retreated. This was done, as soon appeared, not from cowardice, but because of their orders to draw the Spanish leader and his men into a trap. Their plan succeeded. Ordaz pursued the fugitives to a quarter of the city where he suddenly found himself surrounded and attacked by a countless swarm of the enemy. Even the flat roofs of the houses were covered with men who darkened the air with stones, arrows, and other missiles, hurled at the Spaniards from every

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direction. Fortunately Ordaz, serious and unexpected as the danger was, lost neither his courage nor presence of mind but placed his men in a formation best calculated to make the attack. Then he charged upon the enemy where they were densest. It was not long before the Mexicans began to weaken. Ordaz cut his way through them and at last, after much bloodshed, succeeded in reaching the Spanish quarters. One Spaniard and eight Tlaxcalans were killed, and Ordaz himself and most of his people were wounded.

After this disaster Cortes expected the Mexicans would desist from further hostilities, but he was mistaken. Hardly had the Spaniards reached their quarters before they observed the enemy assembling in formidable bodies for a general attack. Cortes instantly made the necessary preparations for defence, and now began a battle which for courage and obstinacy has hardly been equalled. The Mexicans charged with such a din of drums and horns and such fearful battle cries that the roar of the cannon could hardly be distinguished. They seemed unanimously determined to conquer or die. Some kept up a continuous shower of arrows and stones. Others, despising death, sought to scale the walls and others to get possession of the gates. Some mounted upon the shoulders of others to reach the top of the walls, and when they were hurled down dead or wounded, others would take their places instantly. Such was their courage that they trod upon the dead and

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wounded to fill up the breaches, and, terrible as was the effect of cannon and musketry among them, they still kept up their furious attack until at last, after horrible slaughter, superstition forced them to end the battle and withdraw, for they never fought after sundown, and it was now evening.

The night that followed was not much quieter, for, although the Mexicans did not dare to fight, they found ways to set fire to the Spanish buildings and it was only by extraordinary exertions that a general conflagration was prevented. Although exhausted with the struggle and their last night's labor in extinguishing fires, the Spaniards at day-break again were at their posts to resist another attack. One bloody assault followed another. It seemed as if the fury of this embittered nation could never be extinguished, although each fresh attempt to storm the Spanish stronghold failed, and Cortes by various methods slaughtered the natives by thousands and devastated a part of their city by fire.

Cortes shared the fate of most of his soldiers and was wounded. He was struck by an arrow in the left hand. Thereupon he withdrew to his apartments where undisturbed he might form some plan to extricate himself from his dangerous situation. He had hardly begun gathering his thoughts together when the storm broke out anew at every corner of the quarters, for the Mexicans had now formed in bands for a general assault. He rushed

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back and found that his presence was never more necessary, for the enemy now was fighting with even greater courage than on the day before, and all his alertness and skill were required to make the necessary defence at every place.

When the battle was at its height, the unfortunate Montezuma decided — some say voluntarily, others say at the request of the Spaniards — to make an attempt to stop this bloodshed by showing himself in person to his raging subjects and reminding them of their reverential duty to him. He put on his imperial mantle, placed the regent crown on his head, and adorned himself with the wealth of jewels which he had been accustomed to wear on state occasions. Thus arrayed, he went, in company with some leading Mexicans, to the Spanish stronghold. One of these mounted the wall and announced to the furious multitude that their sovereign had arrived and that he was ready to listen to their grievances and end hostilities with the strangers, his guests.

At the mention of his name the battle ceased and respectful silence followed. Thereupon the unfortunate monarch himself mounted the wall. All bowed in reverence, some fell upon their knees and kissed the ground. Glancing over the multitude, Montezuma sought out the leaders and, after thanking them for their expressions of devotion, assured them they were wrong in supposing he was a prisoner. He had only remained so long among his guests that he might acquaint himself with their customs, and show

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his respect for the mighty ruler whose representatives they were. As he was now about to leave them he implored his people to lay down their arms and return to their homes.

When Montezuma had concluded his address, there was a general silence for several minutes, but gradually a low murmur began and soon grew into an uproar of protest. The boldest and most insolent of the crowd hurled invectives at their ruler and shouted that he was no longer Emperor of Mexico but a miscreant, a wretch, and a miserable slave of the enemy of their fatherland. Montezuma tried to speak and motioned with his hand for silence but in vain. There was a great bustle and in an instant arrows and stones were hurled at him. The two soldiers at his side whom Cortes had sent with him tried to cover him with their shields, but it was too late. His cup of sorrow was filled. He was pierced by many arrows, and a blow upon the head by a stone felled him senseless.

Amazed at this unfortunate event, Cortes had the almost lifeless monarch taken to his own house, to save him if possible, and then, flaming with anger, rushed back to take a bloody revenge, but he was too late. Hardly had they seen their Emperor fall when the Mexicans scattered, as if expecting fire from heaven to descend upon them for this cruel deed. In the meantime Montezuma regained consciousness but his condition was pitiable. The thought of his subjects' conduct made him almost insane.

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They had to hold his hands to prevent him from doing injury to himself. Cortes vainly tried to quiet him. He rejected all offers of consolation, tore the bandages from his wounds, and tried to put an end to his life. These passionate outbreaks and his obstinate refusal to take nourishment hastened his death. He died uttering imprecations against his subjects and disappointed the anticipations of the Spaniards by rejecting with great contempt at the last moment the proffer of the Christian faith. When Father Olmedo, kneeling at his side, raised the cross and earnestly entreated him to embrace it, he coldly repulsed the priest and said: "I have only a few hours to live and I will not be untrue to the faith of my fathers." The fate of his children, especially of his three daughters, rested heavily upon his mind. He called Cortes to his bedside and committed these children to his care as the most precious jewels he should leave behind him. He implored him to see that they were not left helpless and that they had their rightful share of his inheritance. "Your ruler, the King of Spain, should do this," said Montezuma, "were it only for the friendly service I have rendered the Spaniards, and the affection I have shown them, which has brought me to this wretched plight. But even that has not turned me against them." These, according to Cortes' statement, were the last words of the dying Emperor. Not long after this, on the thirtieth of June, 1520, he died in the

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arms of one of his nobles, who had always been faithful to him. As long as Montezuma lay suffering from his wounds his subjects remained quiet, but hardly had he died when they prepared for the choice of a new ruler and the immediate resumption of hostilities. Montezuma's successor was his brother, Cuitlahua, a brave and warlike prince, who died suddenly from small-pox four months after he became Emperor.

The new Emperor commenced hostilities with a movement that sorely pressed the Spaniards. He had his bravest men occupy the flat roof and tower of the principal temple, which stood close to the Spanish quarters, from which points they could hurl stones and beams into the inner court. Cortes, who was seriously contemplating a retreat, was thereby prevented from making the necessary preparations and found it imperative to drive the enemy from this dangerous position. He entrusted this duty to Escobar, one of his bravest officers, whom he placed at the head of a picked troop. Meanwhile he himself planned to drive the enemy from the streets with the rest of his force in order to keep them open for those who were attacking the temple. Escobar advanced and met with no resistance up to the foot of the temple steps, a hundred in number. But when they were half way up the ascent, a multitude of the enemy appeared at the rails and hurled down upon them such a shower of arrows, stone, and beams that he and his men

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could not resist their force. Three times he sought to achieve the impossible and three times he was driven back. When Cortes, who in the meantime had not been idle, heard of their plight, he sprang from his horse, without stopping long to consider, bound his shield to his arm as he could not hold it with his wounded hand, and rushed with drawn sword to the temple steps. He called upon his men to follow him and advanced apparently to his certain death. He dashed down everything that opposed him and at last gained the flat temple roof where the flower of the Mexicans had gathered, determined to conquer or die. A fierce hand to hand struggle ensued with clubs and swords, every one resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible. There was not one who would not rather have been cut to pieces than surrender. Some leaped down from the pinnacle of the temple rather than outlive their freedom, and all fought with a lion-like courage never before exhibited in the New World.

While Cortes was making this desperate fight, his troop in the streets was meeting with little success. As soon as the temple was captured, he hastened to the assistance of the rest of his men. He swung himself upon his horse, hung the bridle upon his left arm, and with levelled lance dashed into the enemy, hurling every one who opposed him to the earth. Unfortunately his zeal carried him so far that as he turned his horse he found himself cut off from his men by so great a swarm of the enemy

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that it seemed impossible to make his way through them. His situation was serious but he quickly found a way out of it. He noticed a side street in which the enemy was not so densely massed. He plunged into this and soon regained his men. As he did so he suddenly noticed that his friend, Andreas Duero, had been taken prisoner and was being dragged to the temple, by a great crowd, to be offered up as a fresh victim to the gods. Cortes lost not a minute and, without the least consideration for the number of the enemy, dashed into their midst to rescue his friend. He scattered those who were taking him, and Duero, as soon as he was liberated, with his dagger disposed of one who was trying to hold him and of another who held his horse, mounted the animal unhurt, and the two friends safely rejoined their people. Cortes always considered this achievement as the happiest in all his life. The enemy now gave way on every side. Cortes, therefore, to save more bloodshed, and to give his exhausted men an opportunity for rest, gave the signal for withdrawal. They returned to their quarters and cared for their wounds.

Chapter XIII

Cortes, About to Retreat, Finds the Causeways Cut — The Spaniards Escape with Heavy Loss — The Tlaxcalans Remain True — Guatemozin is Elected Emperor of Mexico

ON the next day both sides remained quiet. Cortes made preparations for his departure and the Mexicans did not appear disposed to resume hostilities. But their apparent peacefulness was far from being genuine. They were more determined than ever to extirpate the Spaniards and they were engaged upon a well considered change of plans to accomplish it. Their design now was to prevent his retreat by cutting the causeways and leaving them to perish from hunger. But Cortes, whose foresight never failed him, built a floating bridge with incredible swiftness, which could be thrown across the opening. As soon as it was ready, he ordered that the retreat should be made in the night. He hoped that either the darkness would enable him to make his escape or that the well known night superstition of the Mexicans would prevent them from interfering with him. But in this he was mistaken.

As soon as night came he divided his army into

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three columns. Sandoval was appointed leader of the advance. He himself led the centre column, and Velasquez de Leon, a near relative of the governor of Cuba, brought up the rear. The army set out in the stillness of midnight. Noise of any kind was carefully avoided and the falling rain seemed to favor them. For a time not a trace of counter preparation was discovered and at last they reached the causeway leading to Tacuba which had been selected for two reasons by Cortes. In the first place, it was the shortest, and in the second, he had hopes that the Mexicans might have neglected to cut it, as it was in an entirely different direction from that which the Spaniards had taken when they came. But this hope was soon dissipated, for when they reached the spot, they found it cut. With the help of the floating bridge, they attempted to make the crossing, but before it was accomplished the terrible battle cry of the enemy was heard, announcing death and destruction on every hand. The lake was suddenly alive with canoes. The beginning of the battle was marked by a terrible storm of arrows and stones. The place, the darkness, and the desperation of the assailants made it one of the most deadly in history.

The Spaniards were caught upon a narrow pier between the first and second openings. They now sought to raise their bridge and take it to the second, but the weight of the heavy guns had forced it between the stones so closely that they could not get

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it loose. All their exertions were in vain and they were now so fiercely attacked in front, in the rear, and on both sides that no hope was left, either of victory or escape. The Mexicans fought with desperation, determined either to die themselves or destroy the enemies of their fatherland. The Spaniards strove with all their skill and might to clear the way, but, as often as they secured a passage with the sword, fresh fighters took the place of the slain. They rushed upon them in such dense masses that they could not use their fire-arms. At last their strength was exhausted. They could no longer withstand this constantly increasing multitude. The advance gave away and there was universal confusion. Infantry and cavalry, friends and foes, were huddled together so closely that they fought blindly and without knowing, in the darkness, whether they struck friend or foe.

In the midst of this dreadful slaughter Cortes got together about a hundred men, with whom he made an effort to cut his way through, and finally succeeded in making his way to the mainland. He could not endure the thought of his own rescue, however, while the larger part of his army was still in danger. Selecting those who had not been wounded, he went back to share the fate of his friends. A part of them had succeeded in forcing their way through to him, but his joy at seeing them was turned to grief when he discovered that the Mexicans were carrying off their living captives to be sacrificed

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to their deities. He tried to save them but was unable to do more than protect the little remnant which had escaped. All were so exhausted that they could not renew the fight. The larger part of his army was either slain or met death by drowning.

The morning light broke and revealed a ghastly spectacle. More than half the Spaniards and over two thousand Tlaxcalans had perished. Velasquez de Leon, besides others of the bravest leaders, were missing. The most of the survivors were wounded. Artillery, ammunition, baggage, and the treasure they had collected were lost. The night of this horrible slaughter, which occurred July 1, 1520, is known to this day in New Spain as the Night of Sorrow. The first rendezvous was Tacuba but they could not remain there long for the whole country was in arms. The only place offering a secure shelter was Tlaxcala. To reach the road leading there they had to traverse the whole northern half of the Mexican lake, upon the west side of which they found a marshy region, and for several days had to march through an unknown country without the sustenance necessary to relieve their exhausted condition. But there was no other way left open to them. They must either abandon all hope of possible rescue or continue their march. Five days they traversed this apparently endless marsh. Early on the sixth they reached Otumba, and, as they ascended the adjacent heights, they observed the entire great plain covered with countless

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warriors at sight of whom the stoutest among them, except Cortes, abandoned all hope. Nothing could daunt his courage. His bearing impressed his soldiers with the certainty that they must either conquer or die. With his accustomed composure he rallied his men and led them against the enemy. As the heavy grass is cut by the scythe of the mower, so the enemy was mowed down by the swords of his soldiers. Nothing could withstand their onset and blood and corpses marked their course. But at last they were exhausted. Their arms sank powerless. The enemy hurled themselves upon them from all sides, and their destruction must have followed had not their watchful leader fortunately saved them. He noticed from a distance the Mexican chief carrying their battle flag. He remembered to have heard that Mexicans gave up all for lost if their flag was lost and his decision was instantly made. Followed by some of his brave officers, who were mounted, he dashed into the midst of the troop which guarded the banner, and hurled the Mexican leader to the earth with a thrust of his lance. One of his attendants sprang from his horse, killed him, and seized the flag. At that same moment all the other flags were lowered, a panic seized them, they threw down their arms and took to flight. Thus a lucky thought saved the Spaniards and gave them a victory which was as glorious as it was profitable, for, when the booty was collected, its value nearly reimbursed them for the treasures they had left behind in Mexico, as

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most of the Mexicans, confident of victory, had bedecked themselves with their most costly ornaments.

On the following day they reached the territory of the friendly Tlaxcalans. They dreaded lest they should find a change in their relations, but their fears were groundless. That noble and magnanimous people remained as faithful as if the Spanish power and fortunes had suffered no calamities. Among these people the Spaniards rested, recovering from their hardships and caring for their wounds. All devoted themselves to recreation save Cortes, notwithstanding he had striven and suffered more than any of them. He had no time to think of rest. He was engaged upon plans for the future and soon was delighted to find that good fortune had not yet abandoned him.

Velasquez, the governor of Cuba, had so little doubt that Narvaez would succeed with the strong force entrusted to him that, without waiting for news, he sent him two more vessels loaded with supplies and munitions. As they were sailing past Vera Cruz the commanding officer there induced them to enter the harbor. He easily took possession of the vessels and just as easily persuaded the men to enter Cortes' service. This was not all that fate turned to his advantage. Not long after this, three other vessels of unusual size, belonging to a fleet which the governor of Jamaica had fitted out for discoveries, appeared on the same coast. Their commander unfortunately took a course toward the

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northern provinces of the Mexican Empire, whose people were both poor and warlike. He was very inhospitably received and after a long series of misfortunes at last succeeded in reaching the harbor of Vera Cruz. His men were also induced to enter Cortes' service. In this way Cortes received such accessions of men and material that his past losses were nearly made good. He felt strong enough now to resume his great plans for the conquest of the Mexican Empire. With his faithful allies, the Tlaxcalans and other Indian tribes which had united with him, he was now at the head of an army of ten thousand men.

In the meantime the Emperor Cuitlahua had died suddenly of small-pox. After his death the electors were summoned to choose his successor. Their duty at this critical time was one of the most serious responsibility. The chief priests implored the blessing of their highest deity in the following appeal:

"O God! Thou knowest that the days of our Emperor are ended, for thou hast placed him under thy feet. He tarries in the place of rest. He has traversed the road we all must go. He has gone to the house where we must all follow — the home of eternal darkness which no light enters. He tarried but a few days in his Empire, for we had enjoyed his presence but a few days when thou summoned him to follow his predecessor. He is therefore grateful to thee for freeing him from such a hard burden and sending him peace and rest. Who

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shall now care for the welfare of thy people and the empire? Who shall be appointed the judge to administer justice to thy people? Who shall sound drum and pipe to call the old warriors and the mighty to battle? Our Lord and our Protector, wilt thou in thy wisdom select one worthy to sit upon the imperial throne, to bear the heavy burden of sovereignty, to love and console thy poor people, as a mother loves and consoles her children? O merciful God, shed the light of thy countenance upon this, thy kingdom. Ordain that in all and through all, the honor shall be thine."

The choice fell upon Guatemozin. He was a nephew of both the late Emperors and when he came to the throne was not over twenty-five years of age. Young as he was, he had had much military experience and had distinguished himself in many bloody campaigns. He hated the Spaniards as Hannibal hated Rome, and, as soon as he heard of the organization of his enemy's army, he assembled an extraordinary force of fighting men from all the provinces at the capital, with whom he determined to fight to the last drop of blood. Cortes, who was aware of his preparations, realized that he must encounter great difficulties and dangers, but he faced them with his usual courage. Boldly and enthusiastically he began the march upon Mexico at the head of his greatly increased army.

Chapter XIV

Cortes Builds Vessels for a Land and Water Attack — A Conspiracy against his Life is Discovered — The Capital is Attacked

AS Cortes approached the capital of the Province of Tezcucó, messengers met him with signals of peace and urgently invited him in the name of their cacique to make his night quarters in the city where everything possible would be furnished for the comfort of himself and his men. The invitation was accompanied with the request that Cortes might be pleased to have his Indian auxiliaries camp outside the city. There being some reason to doubt the sincerity of the cacique's intentions, he decided to avail himself of the invitation at once but at the same time to take every possible precaution and make his entrance immediately, which was accomplished at noon of December 31, 1520. As soon as he had occupied the best and largest area of the city he deposed the cacique who had stood by the Mexicans and been false to the Spaniards. He put in his place the man who was declared by the people to be the most worthy. This man, Ixtlilxochitl, was young and amiable, and of such a noble and distin-

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guished presence that Cortes could not refrain from embracing him and assuring him of his friendship. He also decided to make his headquarters in the city until all his arrangements for the conquest of Mexico were completed.

The Mexicans at this time were in a very good state of defence. At the places where the causeways had been cut, strong bulwarks and breastworks were constructed to prevent the enemy from using floating bridges. The new Emperor, Guatemozin, had armed many of his warriors with bows and very long spears with which they could defend themselves at a considerable distance. Besides this they had a countless number of canoes, so that they could attack from every side. Cortes knew that he could not think of capturing this really strong city until he had a flotilla of small craft with which to dispose of these canoes. But how was he to get them? There were only three or four ship-carpenters in his entire army. All the building material would have to be procured in the Tlaxcalan forest, and his whole Spanish force would not be sufficient to convey it from there to Tezcuco. But the greater the difficulties which confronted this extraordinary man, the stronger was his determination to overcome them. A large number of Tlaxcalans were assigned to his carpenters for manual service. While the necessary material was being prepared, Cortes began to make himself master of the whole region surrounding Mexico in order to cut off the unfortunate capital

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from subsistence. He overpowered some of the towns by force and induced others by mild means to enter into an alliance with him. Guatemozin regarded the defection and loss of his faithful vassals with sorrow and indignation and sought—but in vain—to prevent it. But his great heart did not waver in the manly determination to defend his capital to the last drop of blood.

In the meantime a danger impended over the head of Cortes which threatened a tragic end to his undertaking and his life. The soldiers of Narvaez had willingly joined Cortes, but they did so with the expectation that in a short time and without much danger they would secure untold treasures. The destruction of their hopes and the prospect of all the dangers they must encounter in an attack upon Mexico created great dissatisfaction with Cortes and bitter regret that they had decided to follow him. Villafanga, a common soldier, but a smart, venturesome fellow, who was still loyal to Velasquez, took advantage of his comrades' discontent to hatch a plot which contemplated nothing less than the murder of the general and his leading officers, the choice of a new leader, and return to Cuba. The plan was as follows: While Cortes and his leading officers were at table a large packet of letters from Vera Cruz should be brought in. The conspirators, under pretence of desiring to hear from their country, would crowd about the general while he was opening the packet, and suddenly slay him as well as all the

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others who had been selected as victims. All was now ready for the accomplishment of their black purpose. The following day was selected and the conspirators, of whom there were a large number, had made their plans so secretly that neither Cortes nor his friends had the slightest suspicion of them. At the last moment, however, a fellow conspirator, who had been one of Cortes' men from the start, was suddenly seized with remorse. His conscience stung him so fiercely that at last he ran to Cortes' quarters and made a clean breast of the whole matter.

Cortes was astonished but quickly decided what to do. In company with some of his officers he went at once to Villafanga's quarters. His unexpected appearance at such a time and place so surprised the would-be assassin that he could neither deny his guilt nor think of an defence. He was instantly seized. Cortes snatched a paper from him, which he was attempting to conceal in his bosom, and, concluding that it related to the conspiracy, stepped aside a minute to examine it. It contained a list of the conspirators, which filled him with surprise. But he wisely concealed it and appeared as if he were not aware that any one else was implicated. He reserved punishment for the principal offender, and as his confession made any further investigation unnecessary, he was hanged the same night in front of the house where he had been arrested.

On the next morning Cortes summoned his entire

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force and informed them of Villafanga's treachery and the penalty which had been inflicted, but added that, notwithstanding all his efforts, he had not discovered any of his accomplices, as Villafanga had been persistently silent even under torture. He assured them that as far as he was concerned he was pleased with this secrecy for it would have given him great pain to have delivered any more of his companions into the hands of justice. He closed his address by appealing to them to tell him in what way his operations had been a disappointment or how he had incurred the indignation of his comrades, so that he might correct his mistakes then and there. The hearts of the guilty ones were relieved by these words. They breathed freely again and in their joy at being undiscovered resolved at every opportunity to display to their leader still greater and more steadfast loyalty.

Cortes knew, however, that idleness may ruin the best of men. He bestirred himself, therefore, to provide new occupation for these turbulent ones so that they might have no opportunity for indulging evil fancies. His good luck attended him again. He was informed that the building material for thirteen vessels was ready to be brought from the Tlaxcalan forests to Tezcuco. As the transporting had to be made by Indian carriers and a strong guard was needed to protect them from the Mexicans, the repentant conspirators were selected and the watchful, brave, and true Sandoval

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was placed in command of them. The journey was one of the most difficult they had ever undertaken. Eight thousand *tamanes*, loaded with beams, planks, masts, ropes, sails, and iron-work, went in the middle. A force of fifteen thousand Tlaxcalan warriors escorted them in the advance, rear, and on both flanks, among whom the Spanish soldiers were distributed to keep them in order and accustom them to regular marching. The entire line was more than a mile long. Sandoval placed himself at the head of the force and assigned the command of the leading column to Chichimekatl, a young Tlaxcalan leader, for the proud and fierce Xikotlenkatl was no more. He could not endure the thought of submission to the foreigners and incited a revolt. But his purpose failed, his own people arrested him, and his own father, a second Brutus, pronounced the death penalty and turned him over to the Spanish general, that the penalty might be inflicted. But Cortes, reluctant to consent to the death of the young, fiery patriot, pardoned him, set him at liberty, and took him with him on the march to Mexico. But even this magnanimous treatment did not move his proud heart. He improved every opportunity to denounce the plans of the Spaniards with republican outspokenness, and to prejudice his people against them. His companions informed the Tlaxcalan High Council of his conduct, which in turn notified Cortes that he was striving to raise a revolt in the army and that by the law of their

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land he deserved the death penalty. It was now incumbent upon Cortes to deal with him severely for if he returned to Tlaxcala he would not be mercifully treated. Cortes, however, once more told the obstinate young man that if he came to him and performed his duties he should suffer no injustice. But the Tlaxcalan would not consent, and when Cortes sent the guard to bring him by force he resisted and defended himself until at last he fell dead from many wounds. Such was the tragic end of a man who under other circumstances might have been, perhaps, a Hannibal or a Cæsar.

The expedition had a march of fifteen miles before it, and the way led mostly through a rough and mountainous region. Large bands of Mexican soldiers frequently appeared but when they saw that the Spaniards were always ready for attack, they withdrew. At last Sandoval, after a march of extreme difficulty, had the good fortune to arrive safely at Tezcuco, where he was received with open arms by Cortes. While they were engaged in constructing the vessels, another fortunate event occurred. Some time previously Cortes had sent some of his officers to Hispaniola to bring him reinforcements if possible. He had long been anxious for their return, and had long been disappointed, but at last the glad news came that four vessels with large reinforcements had arrived at Vera Cruz from Hispaniola. They brought two hundred soldiers, eighty horses, two cannon, and a great quantity

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of powder and ammunition. The building of the vessels was now pushed forward with the utmost zeal. Although the Mexicans from time to time attempted to hinder the work and to burn them on the stocks, their efforts were frustrated by Cortes' watchfulness and the bravery of his soldiers. At last the vessels were finished and launched and as the wind filled their sails a joyous shout was raised, announcing the important event to the whole surrounding region.

Cortes now decided to attack the city from three sides and divided his army into as many columns. Sandoval was given command of the first, Alvarado of the second, and Olid of the third. The first was to advance from Tezcuco, the second from Tacuba, and the third from Kajahuakan, while Cortes himself, commanding the vessels, was to support them. The three took the positions assigned them and began the advance. Alvarado and Olid on their march destroyed the fine aqueducts which brought the sweet mountain water from many miles away into the island city. The water famine which followed was only the beginning of the many hardships with which the unfortunate people had to contend. From this time on, not a day passed without some fierce encounter. The vessels had to attack a vast swarm of small canoes and the land troops an equally vast swarm of the enemy at the causeways. The frail canoes were soon destroyed or driven ashore, however, but in the encounters at the causeways

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little was achieved. The Spaniards attacked with the utmost vigor the bulwarks erected to protect the openings, but every night they were forced to retire to the mainland, while the besieged every night restored what they had lost during the day. Notwithstanding all this bloodshed, they made no progress from day to day, and the fatigue of the Spaniards and their allies each day was so great that they began to fear they would gradually succumb.

Chapter XV

The Spaniards Lose Heavily in Battle — The Prisoners are Sacrificed — Some of Cortes' Allies Desert but Soon Return — The City of Mexico Captured — Guatemozin Attempts Flight but is Taken

CORTES, realizing that the battle could not be continued in this wise, decided to end the long and wearisome struggle with one bold venture. He arranged for a general attack at a designated time (this was about the end of May, 1521) and ordered each of his commanders to advance into the city with his division, in spite of all obstacles, and post himself there. He himself took command of the force which was to attack the causeway of Cojohuacan, determined to let nothing stop him from reaching the city. The eventful day came. The leaders placed themselves at the head of their troops and the tragedy began. It was a thrilling spectacle, the irresistible advance of the Spaniards and the stubborn resistance of the Mexicans. Nothing could withstand the onset of Cortes. He carried one defence after the other in desperate charges, cut down or shot down everything before him, and pursued the flying enemy into the city.

Guatemozin, who had been informed of all that

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was transpiring, rejoiced at the imprudence of the enemy as he realized the advantage it placed in his hands. He immediately ordered several strong detachments to march by different roundabout ways to the abandoned causeways, enlarge the openings as much as possible, and hold their positions there. The rest of his warriors, who were engaged in a hand to hand struggle with the enemy, gradually fell back in order to lure the excited Spaniards farther into the city. His cunning scheme was successful. Assuming that his orders had been executed, Cortes without hesitation drove the enemy from one street to another and at last reached the very place where Guatemozin was awaiting him with the flower of his warriors.

Suddenly, at a signal from the Emperor, the hollow boom of the war god's sacred drum was heard from the adjacent temple—a sound which always filled the Mexican with indescribable rage and utter contempt of death. In an instant the Spaniards, to their astonishment, found themselves attacked on all sides so furiously that with all their courage and skill they were unable to withstand it. They began falling back slowly in close ranks and maintaining the defensive, but as the numbers of the enemy increased every moment and their attack grew more furious, they gradually began to seek safety in flight. At last their ranks broke. All, Spaniards and Tlaxcalans, foot-soldiers and horsemen, fled in disorder to the nearest causeway where

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their terror was still further increased by finding the enemy in possession.

Cortes vainly sought by commands and entreaties to check the disorderly flight and restore order. They neither saw nor heard anything. Their only impulse was to save themselves in any way they could. They jumped into the openings in squads. Many of them were drowned and others were captured or killed by the enemy in their canoes, for unfortunately this part of the lake was too shallow to allow the Spanish vessels to come to their assistance. Cortes was greatly alarmed at the danger of his troops but gave not a thought to his own. While striving to rescue some from the water and others from the hands of the enemy, he was suddenly seized by six stout Mexican chiefs and dragged away in triumph. Two of his officers, seeing what had happened, determined to save their commander by sacrificing themselves. They dashed into the midst of the enemy, struggled and fell, but not until they had killed those who were holding Cortes. He was freed and made his escape, although pitifully disfigured and at the cost of his officers' lives, which pained him more than his wounds. A thousand Tlaxcalans and over sixty Spaniards were lost, many were captured, while among those who escaped there was hardly one who was not injured in some way.

Cortes' position was now most critical. His people were completely discouraged and the enemy

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was correspondingly encouraged. They grew so bold indeed that on the next morning they ventured an attack upon the headquarters, which the Spaniards and their allies had great difficulty in resisting. Guatemozin at this junction conceived of another cunning project for the discomfiture of his enemy. He sent the heads of the slaughtered Spaniards through the provinces and everywhere proclaimed that the blood of these enemies had appeased the wrath of the war god and that he had declared that in eight days all the hated foreigners would be destroyed. The news created general consternation among Cortes' Indian allies. Their superstition was so great that they did not doubt for an instant the threat of their war god would be executed. They determined to abandon all association with people whom the Heavens had doomed to destruction. Some of the Tlaxcalans themselves were recreant and began to desert. But Cortes discovered a plan for preventing this withdrawal, which met with success. He suspended hostilities for eight days, meanwhile covering his well intrenched army with his vessels, and quietly awaited the expiration of the time set for his destruction. When it passed and the Spaniards had not suffered the least injury, the allies began to open their eyes. They realized they had been deceived, grew ashamed of their credulity, and came back more determined than ever to assist the Spaniards in the complete overthrow of the hated Mexican Empire. Others, who had not

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really believed the deceitful announcement came from their war god, were all the more grateful that the deception now made the downfall of the Mexicans inevitable. The accessions of old and new allies were so great that in a few days Cortes had an army of one hundred and fifty thousand natives. Instead, however, of being misled by this astonishing increase of his strength, he proceeded more cautiously than ever. He made several tenders of peace to the Mexicans, but Guatemozin, who was thoroughly convinced that any alliance with the Spaniards would result in the servitude of himself and his people, rejected the offers with scorn, being still determined either to rescue the fatherland or die in the attempt.

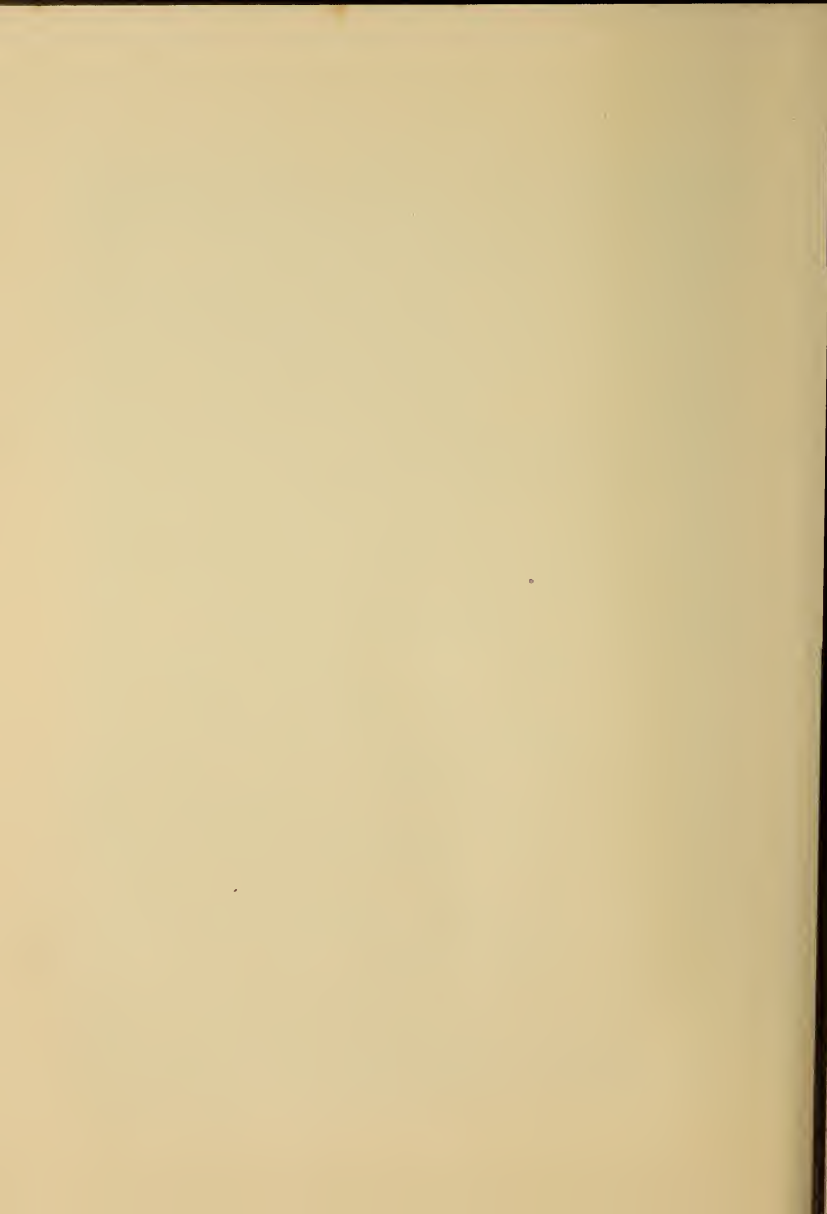
Hostilities were resumed. The city was now so closely shut in that supplies were entirely cut off. This produced a dire famine, followed as usual by a pestilence, which swept away the poor natives in great numbers. Meanwhile the Spaniards daily approached nearer the city by the three causeways. In pursuance of Cortes' new plans every advance was accompanied by preparations for a safe retreat to the mainland in case of necessity. By continuing this policy the city was reached on all three sides and the noble, brave Guatemozin at last fought the Spaniards upon a hand-breadth of land. The latter continued advancing, setting on fire the section of the city already captured, and maintaining their strongly intrenched position. The great market-place was the objective point for all three divisions.

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Alvarado was the first to reach it. Cortes quickly followed at the head of the division led by Olid, driving the Mexicans before him at the point of the sword. Sandoval also joined them and the slaughter was terrible. Three-fourths of the city was now captured and almost reduced to ashes. Guatemozin had intrenched himself in the remaining part with the flower of his soldiers. The Spaniards were about to attack him, but Cortes, who was anxious to save further bloodshed, and flattered himself that Guatemozin could hold out no longer, stayed further hostilities and again made offers of peace. Seemingly the Emperor was ready to accept them and a short cessation of fighting followed without any expressed agreement. Meanwhile the two parties confronted each other, separated only by a trench. Absolute quiet prevailed on both sides. Guatemozin meanwhile put off the Spaniards from day to day with the assurance that he would personally appear and conduct negotiations. This was only a pretext to lull the Spaniards into security, and conceal his own purpose. Acting upon the entreaties of his nobles, he had decided to save himself from death or capture by flight to distant provinces of his Empire, there to raise a new army and make head against his enemies. The necessary preparations were all made. The Mexican nobles were ready to give up their lives for their loved Emperor. They had a great number of canoes in readiness and a bold attack was made upon the vessels while



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Guatemozin, the object of their tender solicitude, was being conveyed across the lake. Sandoval, who was in command of the vessels, vainly attempted to drive them back by firing his heavy cannon. They despised death and wounds and rowed about unterrified, seeking to come to a hand to hand struggle.

Suddenly Sandoval observed a strongly manned canoe being rowed with great speed directly across the lake. He also observed what the canoe contained and at once gave chase. Holquin, whose vessel was the fastest, reached it first, but as soon as the rowers found that he was about to open fire, they dropped their oars and begged him to spare the life of the Emperor. Overjoyed at the honor his good fortune had brought him, Holquin sprang with drawn sword into the canoe. Guatemozin met him nobly and fearlessly, and said he was his prisoner and ready to follow him, praying only that his wife and her attendant should meet with honorable treatment. He turned to the latter, spoke a few words of encouragement, and then extended his hand to conduct them to the vessel. That moment—it was the thirteenth of August, 1521—decided the fate of the whole Mexican Empire which in the person of its Emperor was delivered into the hands of the Spaniards.

Holquin hastened to conduct his prisoner to Cortes who received him upon the shore of the lake with the respect due to his position and his virtues.

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The unfortunate Guatemozin seemed to accept the courtesy of his conqueror with a certain pleasure and accompanied him with great self-command to his quarters. He seated himself for a moment, then rose and said to Cortes, with the interpreter's help: "I have done what my duty demanded. I am of no more importance, and a prisoner like me must be a burden to his captor. Rise! take this dagger (placing it in Cortes' hand) and plunge it into my heart and put an end to my useless life." His wife wept aloud at these words and Cortes was much agitated. He besought the unfortunate man to calm himself and thereupon left him so as not to increase their trouble by his presence.

As soon as it was known that Guatemozin had been captured, the Mexicans laid down their arms and the Spaniards were masters of the city. The first few days were spent in rejoicing over the fortunate outcome of their undertaking, but before long rejoicing changed to discontent at the sight of the small compensation they were likely to receive after so many dangers and hardships. The larger part of the houses were consumed with all their treasures, and when Guatemozin had found that the safety of his capital was doubtful, everything of value in the royal treasury had been thrown into the lake. The booty which was collected was so inconsiderable that many of the Spaniards threw away with contempt the portion assigned to them. They soon began loudly to denounce Guatemozin and next their

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general, whom they were bold enough to declare had taken the largest part of the treasures.

Cortes vainly tried to quiet them. Aldereto, who had been appointed royal treasurer, espoused the cause of the malcontents and demanded by virtue of his office that the Emperor and his premier should be delivered over to him to reveal in what part of the lake the treasures were sunk. Cortes, who had faced so many storms, was this time weak and inhuman enough to yield to this monster. Guatemozin and his loyal premier were stretched upon the rack. The Emperor bore all the torments which the brute could devise with wonderful firmness. His premier imitated his example, but when they proceeded to put him to still more inhuman torture, he uttered a loud cry and turned his eyes to his master as if asking permission to confess what he knew. Guatemozin understood the look and said with the utmost composure, "Am I lying upon a bed of roses?" His words went to the heart of his faithful servant. Not a loud sound escaped his lips again as he expired before the eyes of his tortured master with the sublime steadfastness of a hero and the tranquillity of a saint.

Cortes, who had heard from a distance the outcry of the poor man, overcome by remorse and shame, rushed to the apartment and saved the life of the tortured Emperor.

Chapter XVI

Tapia, Commissioned to Depose Cortes, is Induced to Return to Cuba — Cortes is Confirmed as Governor of New Spain — He Goes to Spain and is Ennobled — A Second Visit to Spain Discloses the Fickleness of the Court — He Vainly Begs the Emperor's Favor — His Death

THE conquest of imperial provinces shortly followed the capture of the city. One after another surrendered and their people suffered the same hard fate which the American islanders had endured for twenty years. They were enslaved and cruelly treated. Cortes in the meantime received no reply from Spain and was uncertain how his operations were regarded there. At last a vessel arrived at Vera Cruz, having on board a certain Tapia, who had been sent to depose Cortes, bring him to trial, and fill his position. Fortunately for Cortes, this man was both weak and cowardly. He cunningly interposed so many obstacles and intimidated him in so many ways that Tapia thought the safest course for him was to return home without making any attempt to carry out the object of his mission. Cortes also knew that he was a very

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covetous man and offered to purchase his horses, slaves, and entire outfit indeed, at a handsome price. Tapia was willing to sell and returned to Cuba with a goodly amount of gold.

The storm impending over Cortes' head, however, soon began to gather again. In hopes of escaping it, he sent other messengers to Spain to lay before the Emperor, Charles the Fifth, a complete report of his operations and present him with his share of the booty. The brilliancy of his deeds and the greatness and importance of his conquest both rejoiced and amazed the young monarch. He not only approved of all that Cortes had done but invested him with the dignity of Governor of New Spain, and appointed a commission to investigate the pretensions of Velasquez. As might have been expected, this commission made a report in accordance with their master's wishes. Velasquez' complaint of Cortes' disloyalty and his claims of governorship over the newly conquered territory were pronounced null and void, and he was declared entitled to no further compensation than the legitimate cost of the expedition. This twofold disgrace was more than the proud and passionate Velasquez could endure. It cost him his life and Cortes now found himself at the very summit of fortune's pinnacle.

He began to raise Mexico from its ruins and to consolidate the Spanish power in the Empire. In carrying out his plans he resorted to the most

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cruel and arbitrary measures, which invited the Mexicans to revolt again. This revolt was speedily crushed, however, and inhuman penalties were inflicted upon caciques and nobles. Upon the mere rumor that Guatemozin had encouraged the Mexicans, that brave, magnanimous prince and also the caciques of Tezcuco and Tacuba were hanged. Some Spanish officials who had been sent to Mexico to administer the royal revenues attempted to exercise authority without recognizing Cortes. But Cortes was not in the habit of allowing his inferiors to treat him contemptuously. He laughed at their efforts to weaken his authority. The officials, however, sent to the Spanish Court a description of Cortes' character and his administration. Their statements made such an impression that it was decided to send a commissioner to Mexico to investigate Cortes' transactions, and if his findings warranted it, to send him to Spain. When the commissioner arrived, however, he was taken ill and died.

Cortes' danger was not yet over. The officials continued sending unfavorable reports to Spain and a new commission was appointed with absolute power to investigate and punish him. Cortes was informed of its purposes. He was furiously indignant to find the arduous and important service he had rendered the fatherland thus requited, and his friends counselled him, in view of such shameful treatment, to meet force with force. He hesitated,

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however, to take a step which would conflict with the loyalty and obedience he owed his sovereign, and at last decided to suffer ungrateful and shameful treatment rather than resist the legal authority of his country. He resolved to go to Spain and entrust his fate to the mercy and justice of the King.

As he appeared before his sovereign, all eyes were turned with admiration and respect upon the man whose achievements seemed to eclipse those of the great heroes. The modesty with which he plead his cause before the high judges removed the suspicions they had entertained. The King received him with expressions of the highest respect and gratitude and showered favors upon him. He decorated him with the order of St. Iago, elevated him to the rank of count, and conferred upon him a broad stretch of territory in Mexico which would yield him a large revenue. But when they came to the confirmation of his governorship, it was clearly apparent they considered it dangerous to invest him anew with the power he might misuse. All that he received was his recognition as general and permission to make new discoveries. The entire administration of civil affairs was entrusted to a viceroy.

Cortes went back to Mexico, but from that time forward his career was marked by an unbroken series of troubles. He was so hampered by the viceroy's strictness and so humiliated by his loss of

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authority that his only relief was found in the discovery and conquest of new regions. He fitted out an expedition on the west coast of Mexico for making discoveries in the great South Sea and succeeded in finding the peninsula of Lower California. Upon his return his life became so embittered that he decided to go to Spain again, appeal to the justice and former favor of the King, and lay his grievances before him in person. He little anticipated the still greater troubles he must endure. During his restless and martial life he had had little chance to know the fickleness of a court and the unreliability of the favor of the great. He was now to discover it.

He was coldly received, indifferently listened to, and his complaints and appeals dismissed as of no consequence. He had grown old. What further important service could he promise? What he had accomplished for his King and country was forgotten or it was considered as already fully recompensed. He found himself at the close of his career, like Columbus, ignominiously treated by a thankless King and his malicious ministers, and obliged to beg for justice. Six long wretched years passed in solitude and neglect but at last grief and indignation at such treatment brought his life to an end. He died October 11, 1547,¹ in the sixty-third year of his age. His body at his express desire was taken

¹ Other authorities assign December 2, 1554, as the date of his death.

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to New Spain, perhaps because he considered his ungrateful fatherland unworthy to be its burial-place.¹

¹ Soon afterward he fell into neglect and could scarcely obtain an audience. One day, however, having forced his way through the crowd which surrounded the Emperor's carriage and mounted on the doorstep, Charles, astonished at an act of such audacity, demanded to know who he was. "I am a man," replied the conqueror of Mexico proudly, "who has given you more provinces than your ancestors left you cities."

Appendix

The following is a chronological statement of important events in Cortes' career:

- 1485 Birth of Cortes.
- 1504 Voyage to San Domingo.
- 1511 Accompanies Velasquez to Cuba.
- 1518 Expedition to Mexico.
- 1519 Founding of Vera Cruz.
- 1519 Defeat of the Tlaxcalans.
- 1519 Cholulan massacre.
- 1519 Interview with Montezuma.
- 1520 Montezuma made prisoner.
- 1520 Mexican revolt and Montezuma's death.
- 1520 Battle of Otumba.
- 1520 Retreat from City of Mexico.
- 1521 City of Mexico retaken.
- 1521 Emperor Guatemozin hanged.
- 1522 Cortes confirmed as Governor of New Spain.
- 1523 Confirmation revoked and viceroy appointed.
- 1536 Cortes discovers peninsula of Lower California.
- 1547 Death of Cortes.



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